

SHADOWRUN®

RUNNING WILD



GO WILD

Some people like to talk about the
peace and tranquility of nature.

.....
Their eyes glaze over, and they rave about
cool breezes, fresh air and fluttering butterflies.

.....
They're not paying attention, and *that makes them easy pickings for any of the predators*, including me. The Sixth World's a place of eating or being eaten. Sometimes the critters are waiting deep in the jungle; other times they're hiding in your bedroom closet.

Proving you're the fittest only ends when you aren't anymore. Know your prey—it's the only way to catch them. But remember, *you just might be something's prey too.*

.....
Running Wild is a sourcebook for *Shadowrun, Fourth Edition*. It presents a detailed overview of the animals, spirits, and other non-metahuman entities that dwell in the Sixth World: from mundane animals that have survived the incursions of mankind, to paranormals that have Awakened, to emergent animals that have found their own ways to embrace the Matrix, to the spirits and feral AIs that may not even acknowledge metahumanity. Game rules and mechanics are provided for these beings and their unusual abilities, but so are rules for characters to interact with, to augment, and to train the critters presented. Every living being is constantly in search of its ecological niche, *Running Wild* can make a campaign home to hundreds of them.

CATALYST
game labs

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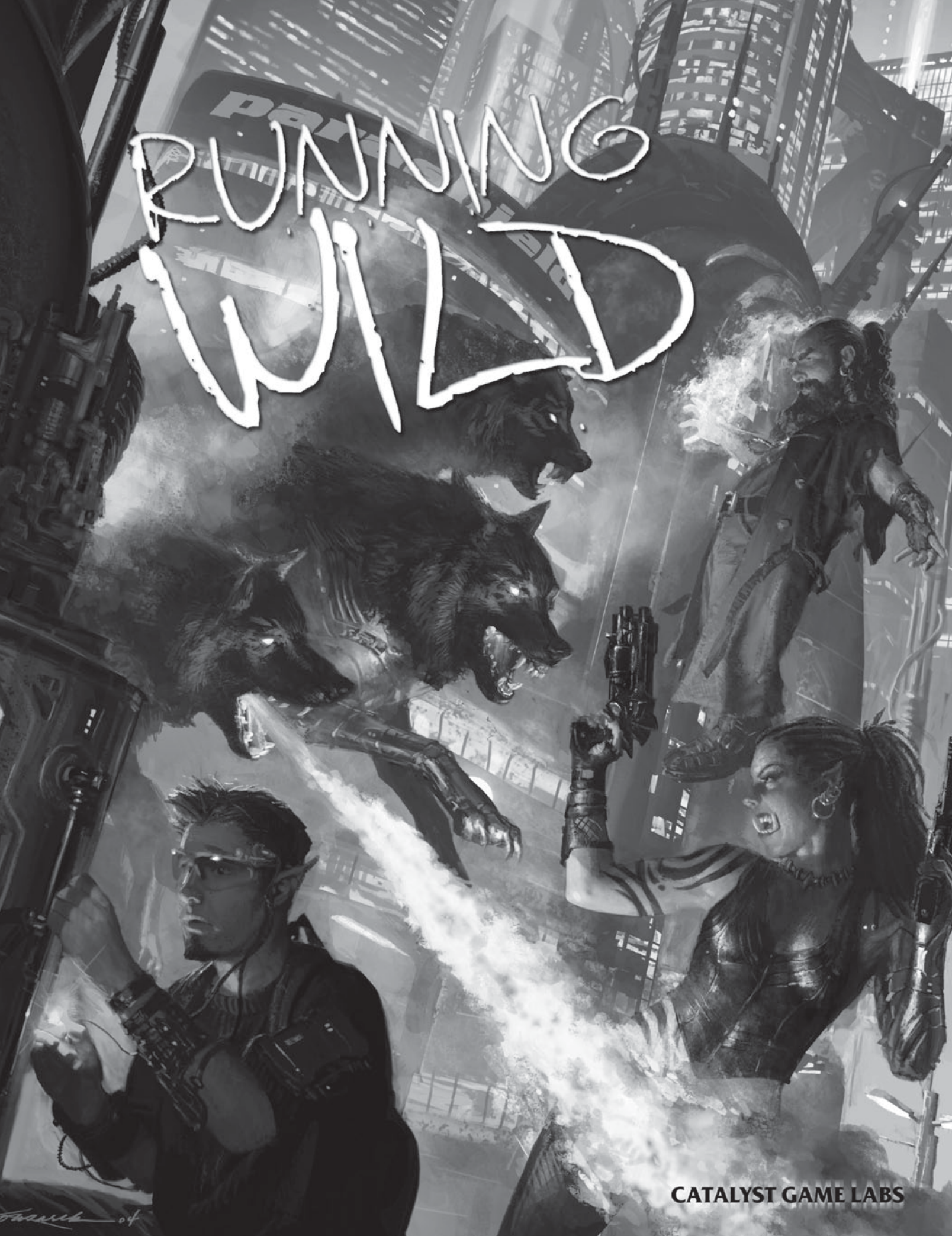
WK
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RUNNING WILD



CATALYST GAME LABS

Thomas of

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Thank you to Susan and Kathryn for constantly allowing me to clack away at the keyboard, when I should be doing more important things around the house. Thank you to our playtesters and our writers for bouncing ideas constantly and making sure that all criticism stayed constructive.—JD

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Connecting Jackpoint VPN ...
... Matrix Access ID Spoofed.
... Encryption Keys Generated.
... Connected to Onion Routers.
> Login

> Enter Passcode

... Biometric Scan Confirmed.
Connected to <ERROR: NODE UNKNOWN>
"Every animal knows more than you do."

JackPoint Stats

38 users currently active in the network

Latest News

* <051472> Last week, a major security hole was found in the MoSoSo software. Get security patch v12.5 immediately, and make sure any SINS you're using aren't being used by anyone else. — Fastjack

Personal Alerts

- * Your "xploit3r" agent has an [urgent message](#) for you
- * You have 12 new [private messages](#)
- * You have 3 messages queued for anonymous re-routing
- * You have received 5 [Metalink Friends](#) add requests
- * You have 74 new [responses](#) to your JackPoint posts
- * PDA: You have a meeting with Mr. Johnson at Dante's Inferno in 3 hours, 27 minutes, and 34 seconds ([map](#))

Your Current **Rep Score**: 55
(91% Positive)

Current Time: July 3, 2072, 1532

PREFERENCES

FEEDS

TASKS

LINKS

HISTORY

Welcome back to JackPoint, omae; your last connection was severed: 5 hours, 13 minutes, 47 seconds ago

Today's Heads Up

* Still wondering what that was that tried to take a bite out of you on the last job? Having a hard time identifying some Matrix icons or some astral signatures? This compilation of files might save you from slotting a parazology knowchip. [Tag: [Running Wild](#)]

Incoming

- * Still clearing your head after the tempo high? Sorting through the fallout of the gangland wars? Want to know what the underworld status quo looks like now that the dust is settling? This file might be just what you want. [Tag: [Vice](#)]
- * Have you been wondering what our would-be lords and masters have been scheming of late in their comfy ivory towers? Find out the latest buzz with our latest download. [Tag: [Corporate Guide](#)]
- * Serious changes are afoot in the Emerald City. Brackhaven is governor, The Star has fallen. The Shotozumi-gumi has taken a pounding. All this and more in our latest guide to the City on the Sound. [Tag: [Seattle 2072](#)]

Top News Items

- * Over the weekend, a Genetique lab in Calgary was badly damaged by subversives during a B&E. At least 3 fatalities and dozens of injuries were reported when the animal containment systems were deactivated. Conspiracy theorists are claiming that this incident is linked to a series of similar raids on Aztechnology holdings in the area twenty years ago. Genetique representatives have refused to comment. Seventeen different ecoterrorist groups have claimed responsibility for the attack. [Link](#).
- * The Corporate Court has issued a preliminary adjudication on the South China Sea territorial dispute favoring the Pacific Prosperity Group, with the remaining contested areas due for further arguments and adjudication later. [Link](#).
- * A unanimous vote by the CAS congress has caused the nation to adopt a new flag, after a long grassroots campaign started by a Virginian school teacher. The flag is due to be unveiled to the public at the North Georgia Military Academy in **Dahlongega**, Georgia, on the 4th of July. [Link](#).

CHAT

MESSAGES

FILES

POSTS

NEXUS

SEARCH

Active

ComStar
Firewall

Active

Jack-in-the-Box
Antivirus

Active

SpamWitch
Filter

On/Receiving

Commcode

Excellent

Signal

Active

Hidden
Mode

Local
Map

RUNNING WILD

Invited Guests

Wyrm Watcher
Dr. Lucy Shapiro

Posts/Files tagged with "Running Wild":

* Animal Kingdom * Walk on the Wild Side
* Infected * Dragons
* Strange Spirits * Technocritters
* Protosapients ([More](#))

CONTINUE

ADVANCED
SEARCH

SAVE



With the taste of bile heavy on her tongue, Deepti could not bear to run any longer. Yet to stop meant certain death. She could smell each of them, their odors as distinct as colors on a palette. There were Burning Wood and Cigar, two men whose smells mixed so thickly in the jungle air you would think they were lovers. Gun Oil scared her, for he carried the scent of experience and death. The woman among the party stank of a flowery perfume, the sort their kind dabbed behind each ear, the lingering kind. She was closest now, moving cautiously through the underbrush. Deepti could hear her below, close enough to touch. She could hide here, wrapped in the twisting arms of this Banyan tree, but the lives inside her would not stand that for long. They needed food, so she needed food. Deepti wished she could shift now, squeeze her slender brown body deeper into the knotted limbs of the tree. She wished she could cry for them, pretend to be a human so the hunters would pass. They would not fire on a pregnant woman. However, her true form had no human skin. She was fur, striped white and black, wiry whiskers, and blue eyes.

No, these four would not let her pass.

Deepti's nostrils flared, and she leapt from the high Banyan branches with a piercing roar. Perfume spun mechanically, bringing her gun up an instant too slow to fire. Deepti was on her, teeth slicing through flesh. Perfume's scream died as a whimper between her powerful jaws.

"There!" Burning Wood shouted, raising a rifle to fire. Deepti spun, trying to keep the tree between her and her attackers. Wood splintered from the impact of bullets.

Cigar cried out, "Aim for the head, we need those cubs alive!"

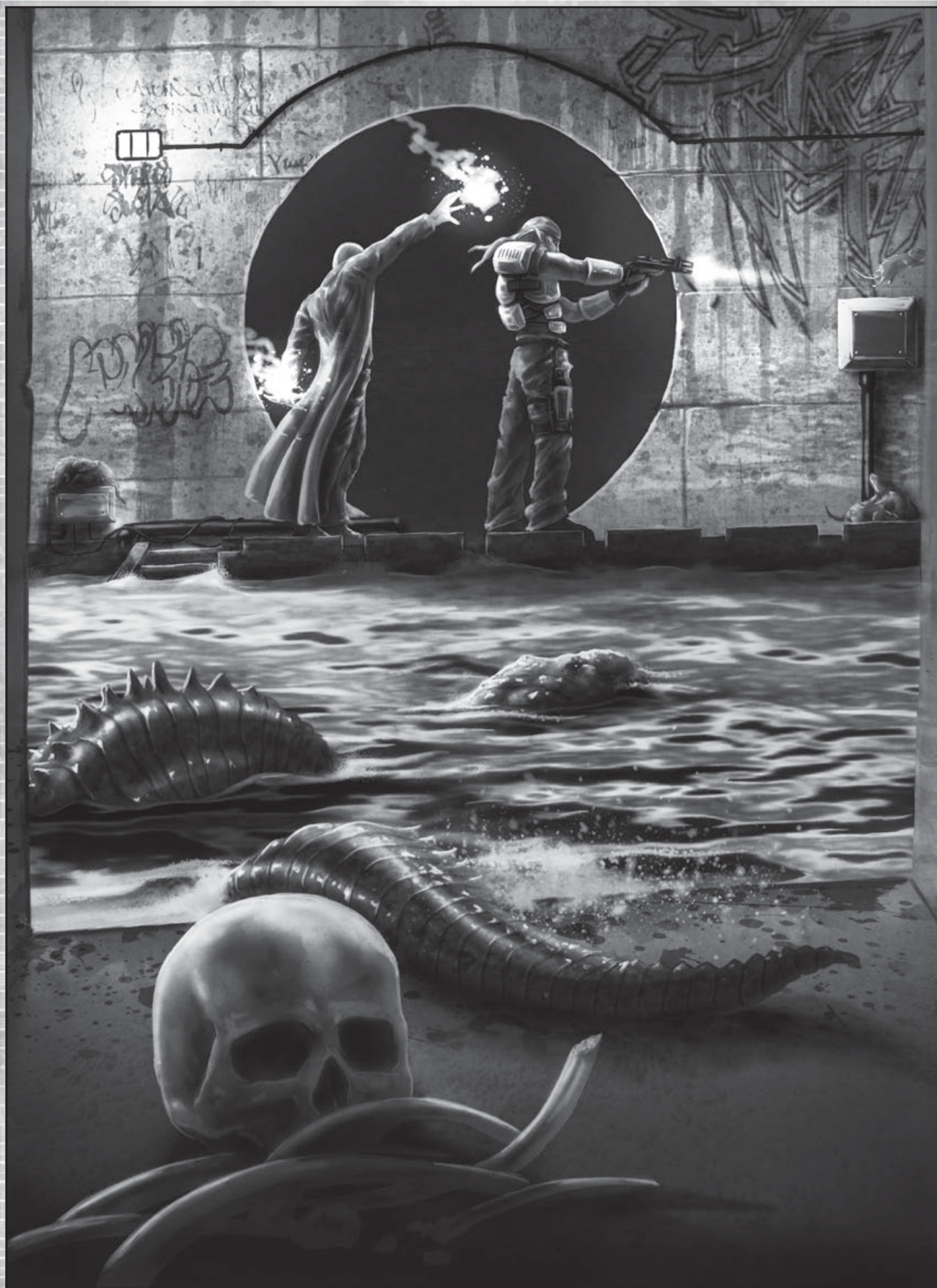
Deepti froze in place. Hadn't she been the target? The Shapeshifter could smell Gun Oil far off to her flank, circling in behind her. The two lovers approached from the front with all appropriate caution. She could not fight them all in her condition. Another moment, and they would have her—have her offspring. Deepti would not let that happen. She reared up on her hind legs and roared.

"Shoot now, shoot now!"

She shoved a set of claws and then a second into her own belly. The searing pain buckled her knees and sent her to the ground. They would not have her young, not now.

"Shit." She heard Burning Wood moan as her eyes fogged over. "Can we at least save the fur?"





THE LANGUAGE OF THE EARTH

Posted by: Ecotope

Permit me to begin at the end. Permit me to begin with you, the reader, mutely scouring this document for information that may be exploited for profit, never pausing to understand your role in this super-organism we call biodiversity, never considering what the Earth is saying to you. If this is you and you are looking for the bottom line, here it is: black market fauna and environmental goods account for 30 percent of the estimated trillion-plus nuyen underground economy. Trash smuggling alone constitutes a 30 billion nuyen market, most of it flowing out of Japan and the UCAS into puppet nations and corporate dumping grounds. There is money to be made in capturing, killing, and cutting down what the Earth has given us.

Perhaps we have Charles Darwin to thank for that. After all, it was his Origin of Species that led to the survival-of-the-fittest concept. Consequently, the world began operating under the assumption that survival is a competition, picking winning and losing species based on metahuman desires. Darwinism triggered the idea that species can become endangered or destroyed outright, which instantly attached a price tag to fauna. His research also led to the possibility of genetic superiority.

Over time, natural selection gave way to unnatural selection. We began to meddle in Mother Earth's grand scheme. Some species died while others, the ones corporations, philanthropists, and sometimes governments had chosen, carried on despite what nature had envisioned. This led many people, like myself, to believe that the world needs saving from its self-aware inhabitants. Slowly, we have fallen away from the natural world, from natural selection. In turn, the world has changed. Today's world is cybered, it is genetically enhanced, and the natural world—the great biodiversity given to us by Creation—is responding in unpredictable and sometimes dangerous ways. Some of us still believe that the Earth speaks to us, though at times we choose not to listen. We should, because Her language is that of survival. Her story is spoken in the veins and leaves of that which sprang from the Awakening to prowl the contours of our metahuman jungle, and it is cast in the bones of what biodiversity is lost to history.

I speak for the bones.

Despite what the media has convinced you to believe, preservation of the Earth's biodiversity remains the primary emphasis behind so-called ecoterrorism. Because of what I do—who I've killed—I will always be seen as a terrorist, but the real terrorism is what is happening to the natural world. Allow me to speak for an Earth we no longer hear. Some of the information I provide comes from my own experience. Some of it is research gathered along the way. The data should offer insight into how the Earth has responded to changes over the last century and warn you about what changes may be waiting for us in the near future.

● Permit me to expose Ecotope for trying to cover his own ass. He's just another terrorist trying to justify his actions by preaching the gospel of the righteous. The truth is we are part of evolution. We are part of 'Mother Earth's grand scheme.' So all of this banter about how metahumans are wrecking the garden is bullshit.

● Clockwork

HORIZON MEDIA CLIP ::SEARCH:: EXTINCT SPECIES PROFILES FROM 2000-PRESENT

- African Gorilla
- Black-Footed Ferret
- Black Rhinoceros
- California Condor
- Caspian Seal
- Cuban Crocodile
- European Eel
- Fishing Cat
- Gray Bat
- Grevy's Zebra
- Honey Bee (Africanized, Dwarf, Giant)
- Iberian Lynx
- Nine-Spotted Ladybug
- North American Panther
- Parachute Tarantula
- Polar Bear*
- Rafflesia Magnifica
- Slender-Billed Vulture
- Striped Possum
- Sumatran Tiger
- Tasmanian Devil
- Tortoise (Ploughshare, Radiated)

**Reintroduced through the Doomsday Ark Project*

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// in-text references and bibliography removed //

BOOK OF THE DEAD

By Dr. Nerdal Ziusudra

It starts with a small loss, like the death of Coccinella novemnotata, the nine-spotted ladybug. Such a loss might not seem relevant on the surface, but in nature everything has a place and a purpose. We are all connected. However, in 2071 there are fewer of us to be connected than ever before. In what Ebran the Scribe calls the 'Sixth World,' we are in the midst of an unprecedented sixth extinction event. Science debates the triggers for this Holocene extinction event, but the losses to Earth's biodiversity have accelerated over the past 60 years. There are now nearly half the number of distinct species that existed prior to the turn of the century. The Awakening had something to do with that, as did the sudden onset of global industrialization and dependence on fossil fuels as early as the 1700s. Once we discovered that fuels deep beneath the surface could power our cars and personal entertainment units, humanity began searching in earnest wherever we suspected those fuels might be. Science marched along, doggedly gaping at the wonder of all the new species discovered in these previously unexplored terrains. We saved most of what we found. What didn't survive was any species unknown and not cataloged before it was crushed under the wheels of progress. Untold genetic diversity was lost to the slashing and burning of rainforests in South America and Africa or poisoned by strip-mining in Asia or North America.

Urgent Message...

ANIMAL KINGDOM





The losses are not limited to obscure insects or rare species of frog. We have lost over 100 bird species that we know of. The once thriving polar bear has been reduced to a zoo attraction along with hundreds of other animals both known and unknown. Honey bees are no different. The as-yet unexplained 'Colony Collapse Syndrome' accelerated in 2012 and again in 2061. Albert Einstein once posited, "If we were ever to see the extinction of the honey bee, humankind would follow four years thereafter." That has not happened, but the food web collapse resulting from the continued destruction of so many species has created conditions for even more loss of life.

We are seeing an increase in hyper-disease conditions among various species of plant, insect, and animal life. One such case is the story of the cacao tree. Now only grown in scattered pockets of Africa and Venezuela, cacao, the bean used to make chocolate, is virtually extinct. The labor-intensive crop is meant to be harvested only in fertile rainforests. Today, the few rainforests we have left are battlegrounds and political footballs. What growers earn from their sweat, states levy in taxes. The only economic solution is growing cacao outside of its natural element. Despite scientific advances in agriculture, cacao grown outside of its natural habitat faces extreme risks of pathogenic fungal attack. On average, only ten percent of any crop survives the season, which has made raw chocolate as lauded an item as caviar.

Extinction events start with something insignificant but end with the termination of at least half the species on the planet. I don't claim to know how to stop it, but religions across the world point to how we can survive it. We must collect living samples of everything we can and preserve those samples until a time where the species can thrive on their own again.

// End Uniformat text file :: user Ecotope//
//Timestamp: 02/11/72 //

- Following Dr. Ziusudra's 2067 article, a global diversity fund was created with Draco Foundation funds to collect and store animal specimens. Eco groups, zoos, and individuals brought genetic material (bones, fur, etc.) as old as 200 years to be categorized and saved in the chambers of what the media dubbed "The Doomsday Ark." Naturally, the mission to catalog the world's remaining species was led by Dr. Ziusudra, who then split his time between Oxford and the Ark's home in Norway. In 2069, after receiving nearly a thousand pieces of genetic material from Amazonia, Dr. Z announced a major breakthrough. Unfortunately, we can only speculate on that breakthrough. Dr. Z was extracted from Oxford hours before he was to make his speech. No one has heard from him since then.

- Smiling Bandit

A GREEN (R)EVOLUTION

From the window of an airliner, metahuman cities look like a surrealist's interpretation of the earth into which they are cut. Taillights run like red rivers between the blackened rooftops. People march, tiny as ants, where our social super-organism leads them. This metahuman jungle has eaten away at the natural world, destroying habitats for all manner of species. However, not everything on the planet is fumbling towards extinction. Left with no place to live, nature adjusts to its surroundings. As a weed forces its way through concrete, fauna evolves to survive in our metahuman spaces. Arcologies and skyrakers contain spaces that can be inhabited by

species that have adapted to exploit the available niches. The layers of tunnels for sewage, utilities, transportation, and plumbing allow animals to thrive and move beneath our feet. Rodents and insects continue to develop the biological tools to create space in walls and utility pipes and to find food and water in trash and storage.

- A lot of this is accounted for by members of the species with beneficial traits living longer and breeding more. They end up having more offspring imbued with their protective traits. That's natural survival, which is what Spencer's concept of survival of the fittest is all about.

- Nephrine

- Natural survival is a bit of a misnomer. For an endangered species to survive it needs to do something completely unnatural. It might be a small shift in diet or habitat. At times it takes genetic alteration, either through evolution or metahuman interference.

- Snopes

Wildernesses have made a comeback within our cities. In densely urban areas, tribal and religious groups often create backyard habitats in respect for nature. Small mammals have long found solace in groomed parks and golf courses. This continues today as small wildlife—squirrels, fish, and birds—are brought in to lend authenticity to the urban wilderness. While not the same as the wild, it's still similar enough to not disrupt breeding cycles. Some corporate scientists are even working on ways to influence migratory patterns to compel birds to migrate exclusively between proprietary parks.

Interfacing with the metahuman world is only one way that species survive. Others shunned evolution for revolution, migrating to extreme limits in order to survive. The key for these species' survival is finding hostile or rugged environments far away from metahumans. Diuca finches, for example, were once on the verge of extinction, but now they survive on glacial ice.

Surprisingly, a handful of species survived through parthenogenesis, or "virgin births." Species of lizards and amphibians that were believed to be extinct have been repopulating areas with fewer numbers than thought possible. The parthenogenesis has been happening largely in isolation throughout parts of Indonesia. There is no evidence that either magic or genetic manipulation played a role.

Not all species can adapt to the shifting habitat. Some must rely on governmental protections or even magic to survive. Everyone knows about the role magic has played in the restoration of the Earth's ecosystem. However, science has actually done more to clean up pollution. Besides the reforestation of South America, using magic to restore the ecosystem has had unpredictable results. Instead, green-friendly nations such as Guatemala turned to science, requisitioning genetically altered poplars, elder, and bamboo trees to siphon up the toxic metals left behind from years of illegal dumping.

The science worked in conjunction with governmental protections. Governments, wealthy private citizens, and native corporations all stepped forward to speak on the Earth's behalf. To protect biodiversity, no-hunting zones were established on land and sea in the areas hardest hit by pollution, despeciation, and other forms of biodegradation.



- The private citizens Ecotope is referring to are dragons. Several greats, including Lung and Ryumyo, have purchased land and set it aside for wildlife. The Draco Foundation has been pouring money into Iceland and Greenland to protect that part of the world from industrial encroachment.

- Winterhawk

- In the short term, the government protections are working—at least in Australia. Economic studies have shown that limited commercial fishing actually improved size and volume of fish caught by twenty percent around these green zones.

- Kay St. Irregular

Science has prompted a green revolution in another way. We have seen a slow reintroduction of species through cloning and other techniques. Beginning with the foundation of the Native American Nations, governments began to aggressively fund research focused on eventually reintroducing species back into the wild. On the North American continent, whole food chains were reintroduced. Larger species such as the black and brown bear, buffalo, elk, and moose have been reintroduced. These species remain on the endangered list and are closely monitored by scientists and eco-groups alike, but early indications suggest many will eventually reach sustainable numbers.

Not all attempts at artificial restoration have been as successful. In the early 2030s, a team of scientists working under the direction of the Chinese government eradicated seventy-five percent of the indigenous and non-indigenous species outside of Wuyi Shan to combat a virulent strain of H9N9 avian flu. Their intent was to replace the wildlife using samples collected prior to the extermination. Unfortunately, only a small number of the samples yielded growth. The international furor forced China to discontinue its program.

A second controversial eradication happened in the 2040s when scientists from what was then known as Yamatetsu lost track of a bioengineered species of rabbit. The experimental species managed to escape into the wild. Specimens were extremely invasive and threatened to cause an imbalance to the ecosystem. The incident garnered national media attention. The emperor reprimanded Yamatetsu for failing to adhere to proper safety regulations.

In South America, doctors bioengineered once-extinct cloud leopards and kept populations alive on private parks and property. More recently, we have seen national parks exploited by corporations as refuges and breeding grounds for their genetic tests. Failures and questionable decisions will no doubt continue, in spite of anyone's best efforts at preservation.

THE FITTEST

There is no Yomi Island for storm dolphins. When the world Awakened into a new age of magic, all manner of fauna faced intrusion from novel species. With the natural order disrupted, these paracritters found their ecological niches without regard to metahuman restrictions and laws. The distinction between mundane animals and paracritters arose out of the need for self-preservation within the animal kingdom and our metahuman desire to categorize what we fail to understand. Some metaspecies exist within packs of normal creatures. Metaroos, for example, are Awakened kangaroos that live within packs of mundane Australian

Aetherpedia Query: Word on the Street Interview Database

What's the difference between normal and paranormal creatures?

"Paranormal creatures cast spells, right?"

—David, Seattle

"Paracritters are of the old world. They returned to us during the Awakening like the unveiling of a Tolkien fantasy."

—Paris, Munich

"It's the next step in evolution. We live in a new world, where you are required to adapt either through magical or technological means. Paranormal creatures are the ones best equipped to deal with evolution."

—Sarah, Boston

"Paranormal creatures, or metaspecies, possess innate paranormal abilities, such as exceptional resistance to diseases or poisons. Some even have offensive or spell-based abilities that make them extremely dangerous if allowed to roam free."

—Constance, Hokkaido

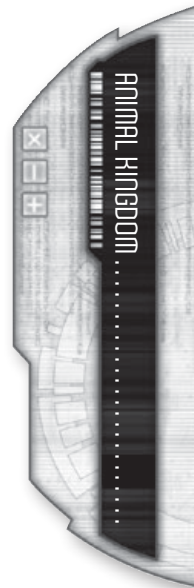
kangaroos and often protect the pack from attack. Other species, like the stormcrow, have separated from their progenitors because of differences generated by their Awakening.

- By differences, Ecotope means legitimizing the term "murder of crows." Stormcrows are fiercely territorial, especially in regards to their progenitors. The omnivores have been known to murder mundane crows on sight.

- Glasswalker

Curiously, shapeshifters are seen as neither metahuman nor beast, and they are generally treated as outcasts by both species. This is the inherent problem of evolution. Often, the selected species discovers that it has no place among its progenitors and must find others like it to form a community. Unfortunately among many of the Awakened species, they are so rare that they must find a like-minded species with whom to coexist for survival.

Also working to find their place in the animal kingdom are sapient races. Anyone with access to a trid knows about dragons, but the average world citizen is barely aware that other non-metahuman sapients exist. Though overlooked by metahuman society, they are not without allies in their struggle for acceptance. Several governments have created organizations to protect the few rights granted to other sapients. Advocacy organizations also reach out to metasapient. PETA and the World Wildlife Federation are crucial to the drive for sapient rights. They provide sapients with protected lands as well as the means to have a voice among metahumanity. Finally, non-metahuman sapients have each other. Sapient species and metaspecies often cooperate in recognition of the threats they all face. Merrows, for example, work beside storm



Aetherpedia Query: Word on the Street Interview Database

Should sapient creatures have rights?

"What rights? Citizenship? Voting rights? Marriage rights? Do you really want to see that happen all over the world? They put a dragon in the White House for fuck's sake.

—Stephan, UCAS

"I've heard the talk about sapients getting rights, and I say why not? Sasquatch and centaurs live among us with no difficulty. If these species are willing to abide by the laws of our society, then I have no problem welcoming them as equals."

—Kelly, Tir Tairngire

"How do you define sapience? Is the orang-utan who thinks to cover his head with leaves to shield himself from the sun sapient? I think, therefore I am? But how do you ascribe rights to that? How do you force a separate species to abide by metahuman law?"

—Tobias, Guatemala

dolphins to protect themselves from hunters as well as natural predators, including krakens and megalodons.

///Begin Transcript///

Source: Interview with Badriya Yoruba
(Global Report, June 2071)

The laws of sapience vary globally, though the International Bill of Meta-Human Rights (IBMHR) and the Corporate Court have standards that signatory organizations are expected to heed. Western culture acknowledges sapients but rarely extends us the courtesy of metahuman law. There are exceptions. Sasquatches and dragons have been made legal citizens. Yet naga are still considered pets in most Western countries.

Recognition in Western nations often depends on how much money or power your race commands. Acceptance only came for eastern centaurs once they had legal control of the Lake Louise colony. Eastern cultures show a very different philosophy. Our cultures still believe in the history that came before this Sixth World. In Angkor, naga are worshipped as royalty. We Azanian Centaurs have been treated as equals since the Awakening.

Some people fear that the rise of sapients will bring metahuman dominance to an end. Others see us as an interesting piece of science to be caged, observed, and finally dissected. Bounty hunters are paid top dollar to capture sapients so we may be domesticated. Imagine a life lived from behind a cage where you perform tricks to be rewarded with food. Far too many of us lead this life.

///End Transcript///

- The government of Yakut recognizes leshies as citizens. It's part of their new social outlook. Give refuge to everyone who can help keep your government afloat. The policy hasn't really worked. Despite

having what's believed to be a sizable population, these beings simply have no interest in interacting with other societies.

- Snopes

- Humanis is a major threat to non-metahuman sapients. They view these people as an abomination that must be destroyed. They generate a lot of anti-sapient propaganda on the Matrix, riling up their fringe members to go out there and bag a sapient for the cause. Humanis strikes the young. They send in scouts to find out where sapients are dwelling and then let the militants take action.

- Aufheben

- Isn't there anyone out there to stop Humanis from doing this?

- Baka Dabora

- Not really. The average person knows deep down that Humanis is right. There are scattered support groups that tote animal rights but most of them are hunt saboteurs like the Animal Rights Commission (ARC) who are interested in preventing animal abuse but not putting sapient beasts on the same footing as man.

- Marcos

EVERYDAY COMPANIONS

Animal life is an integral part of metahuman society. Every kid has either owned or wanted a pet. We give them names like Chopper or Sandy. We teach them to fetch. We feed and water them. When they get too old, our parents tell us they went off to a special farm where they can roam. We learn compassion for these creatures that live alongside us. We engage in anthropomorphism, expecting them to have the same ethical outlook on the world that we do. If they die young, we flush them down the toilet or bury them in a shoebox in the backyard.

But this is not our only daily interaction with animals. Animals are our food, they protect our private spaces, and they even help us make critical scientific advancements. In the 2070s, animals are deeply integrated into our culture and belief systems. In feral zones, where the death of a single goat could mean the loss of food for a month, animal life is crucial to the survival of metahuman life. PETA and their ilk have manned the battle lines for years, reminding us that our survival depends on the animal lives we so readily overlook. Here are just a few of the ways that animals affect us every day.

HOUSE PETS

I grew up a cat person. Until university, I believed that dogs were the genetic offspring of wolves, and everyone knows that wolves are not meant for the metahuman world. It turns out that dogs are. "Man's best friend" is more accurately man's best science experiment. We have bred dogs the way high school kids breed fruit flies in science class. Each successive generation becoming more specialized, the process more perfected.

Today, personalized pets are the norm. Be it dog, cat, snake, gerbil, fish, or bird, you can tailor the breed that you want if you have the cash. Have allergies? Go hairless. For a few nuyen more, you can add extra genetic manipulations such as hypo-allergenic, glow in the dark, stunted growth, and so on. Six to eight weeks later, you can pick up your personalized pet security-tagged to your SIN, inoculated, and spayed or neutered per the law.

INCOMING FEED.....



• Once upon a time, if you wanted a dog you'd go down to the local Humane Society and browse the racks. That still happens from time to time, but there are fewer and fewer such places. Unless the owner is dead, the pound can check an RFID for owner info, and then send the pet home along with a bill for the trouble.

• Sticks

• Puppy mills have also been nearly eliminated, as traditional breeding is no longer cost effective. Designer Genes and its competitors have introduced dogs, cats, and custom pets engineered with popular features like hypoallergenic fur. They've priced many of them cheap enough for the common man to buy.

• Pistons

House pets exist to please their metahuman companions. If your little girl still wants a horse, you can order up a pony that stays that way until the kid turns sixteen. But what happens when she turns seventeen? Pet dumping is a global issue made worse by genetic engineering. Most pets bred for indoor environments die quickly when left to survive on their own. The ones that do make it turn feral, creating a dangerous problem, especially in suburban areas where there is enough ground cover and prey for these creatures to thrive.

SECURITY CRITTERS

Guard dogs remain a key element in any security network. Canines are cheaper than metahumans, they don't go on strike, they can't be bought off, and usually they can't be hacked. Other animals have also become critical to the modern security network.

Today, biodrones take an increasing percentage of the security responsibility. Rat and bird drones play an increased role in providing covert protection in a discreet manner. Advancements in cyberware have led to heavily armed attack dogs being networked to a security hacker and upping the offensive power basic security animals can provide.

Paranormal animals have been trained and added as expensive options to security. The Barghest and Hellhound are the most common, as dog trainers had a relatively short learning curve to handling these beasts. However, the cockatrice, chimera, and others have all been used effectively.

FOOD ANIMALS

Pollution and lack of working space challenged many animal businesses in the first half of the 21st century. The introduction of prion diseases stifled imports and exports, and by 2015 forty percent of the world's meat industry went bankrupt. This, alongside increasing fungal problems with many of the world's crops, allowed the dominance of soy as food for over half a century. To get back into the game, companies turned to smaller animals like crickets, frogs, and krill for food production, as they are easier to farm and process into larger imitation foodstuffs. Larger species such as cows, sheep, and even chickens are now considered luxury foods due to the high cost at which they must be sold in order to sustainably farm them. We have science to thank for giving us cheap substitutes cultured in living laboratories.

SCIENCE'S LITTLE DARLINGS

Many animals have been used in genetic and cybernetic experiments in the name of progress. Rats, pigs, and rabbits share



physiological traits with metahumans that make them valuable for studying diseases and treatments. Under different sets of corporate laws, it varies to what extent animal testing is performed as opposed to other solutions, including computer simulation. Most of the scientific testing performed on these species has occurred for hundreds of years. At the same time, new studies emerge daily—including those tied to the interactions of modern science and magic.

From the scientific perspective, there has been an upswing in cybernetic interface testing. Scientists use critters with physiologies similar to metahumans before running metahuman function tests. The belief that non-sapient fauna can be wired to the Matrix and perform instinctually in that setting has led to a whole host of novel tests. On the magic side, experimentation with spell formulas and spirit hosting has led to a phenomenon of spirit life mimicking animal life. I will discuss each in turn.

Technocritters

Electronic pets have been around since the 20th century. These were initially simple scripts or semi-autonomous know-bots with a rudimentary level of understanding akin to that of a common animal. Over the last few years, scientists have begun investigating claims of electronic pets that have a physical form. These “technocritters” are named for their similarity to the metahumans we call technomancers.

- Yes, kids, the word of the day is bullshit.
- Baka Dabora
- No, read my posting on technocritters. This is legitimate.
- Smiling Bandit

House pets, predators, and even insects have been identified as technocritters. Some hackers have had limited success in communicating with these digital entities. Based on early analysis, these personas do originate from host bodies. The electronic wolf wandering across nodes has a meat body waiting for it somewhere in the natural world. How this occurs is a matter of endless speculation.

Spirits

Magical phenomena are subject to endless research. As our understanding of basic principles grows, thaumaturgists work towards deeper revelations about the metaplanes, cycles of magic, and interactions with various species. Spirit hosting research gained notoriety during the Chicago Incident, when we discovered that sapient spirits could aggressively invade a metahuman host.

The Incident led many state and corporate entities to undertake research to combat this phenomenon. Researchers began experimenting with various types of spirit hosting, generally using animals as hosts. Once released from binding, many of these spirits were able to continue existing on our plane. Often, they chose to retain their animal forms. Other free spirits have assumed animal lives without being summoned. This animal mimicry lacks a scientific basis, but it may be due to a spirit's lifestyle choice.

THE HUNTERS' WORLD

Today, several species are under threat of extinction because of the metahuman element. There are species harvested for scientific research and food or bred for so long in captivity that they are no longer capable of surviving in the wild. Many value their parts or hides, so we hunt them. In some instances, hunting these species is legal sport designed to curb a burgeoning animal population. In other instances, it is punishable by death. Subsistence hunting has been allowed in most civilized nations as animal populations have risen. Native tribes in the NAN, South America, Africa, and China have reestablished wildlife refuges, returning the land to the wild. Many also establish zones outside of these refuges for subsistence hunting. With proper licensing, a tribal member can hunt deer, elk, and others for food. The same types of licensing requirements exist for fishing throughout most of the Sixth World.

This puts some governments directly in the crosshairs of politically savvy animal rights groups like Save Our Seas and Sierra Inc. Animal rights groups don't agree with the population control argument. They point to North and South America, where hunting an animal in one nation would be illegal over a border just a few miles away. These groups suggest that animals should be safely relocated to parts of the world where they are underpopulated as opposed to letting them collect in small pockets only to be gunned down under the guise of overpopulation.

The worst offenders, nations such as Aztlan, Japan, and the UCAS as well as some members of the Corporate Court, attract the militant attention of TerraFirst! These ecoterrorists repeatedly spotlight the cruelties that these nations condone. Media attention intensifies the dispute between corporations and nations over what is actually allowable. While they promote themselves as eco-friendly, Japanese corporations continue to harvest whales in the name of science, but we know the parts just end up as a delicacy on some exec's plate.

- Legal hunting isn't always fun and games. Predators get concerned when hunters come nosing around their territory. But if you're in a place that has regular hunting, then the predators will usually leave you alone.
- Glasswalker
- Other times local predators will decide to come after you. That happened to us on a recent trip. This corp stiff was playing with his gun, pointing it at a pygmy goat that had wandered into our camp and pretending to pull the trigger. Out of nowhere comes this lioness, big as day. The thing was on him faster than my wires can move me, biting and scratching until he couldn't move any more. We had to put her down and medevac the camper. Our guide figured she was hunting that goat and felt a little angry about some weekend warrior taking away her kill. After that I started putting up a perimeter and keeping watch at night.
- Rigger X
- Even after you've dealt with the critters, the metahuman element sneaks up on you. Preserve security guards are always circling every dead carcass like some kind of four-wheeled fly. They won't let you take the body off their land without you paying a species fee. Depending on the breed, that could cost up to 3500 nuyen. The police aren't the only ones that you need to beware. Places like the NAN,



Azania, and Tasmania are filled with rogue tribes or rebels that just don't agree with what the government says you can do on their land.

• Kane

I bring this up because the legal hunting of protected species is the biggest problem that no one talks about. In some ways, nations and corporations quietly support the hunt by providing access to rare critters. The fine line is distinguishing between awareness and spectacle. Many nations offer safaris and national park tourism. The money made from these practices funds conservation projects to help preserve species on display.

Unfortunately, the more access people have to rare species, the more likely that someone will want to own one. There is a high level of prestige that comes with owning a rare pet, and there is no shortage of buyers for exotic animals. Nor is there a shortage of people willing to provide such rarities, for the right price. Wildlife trafficking and smuggling has blossomed into an 80 billion nuyen industry, which is enough to make even high-level government officials avert their eyes. In 2068, Japan's speaker of the house, Yohei Eda, was arrested for his role in an illegal whaling operation. Eda's company had been selling whale parts on the black market for close to 5 million nuyen a year. Black market animal trading is very similar to organlegging. In some regions, the cartels can profit more from illegal animal parts than from narcotics.

Moving fauna has gotten even easier lately thanks to governments muddying the waters with conflicting policies. With global political instability, it has become difficult to keep up with what is legal. There are different laws under different regimes, which make it impossible to keep a species on the protected list long enough to make a recovery. Even when the laws stay on the books, it only takes a bribe to make law enforcement look the other way.

• I did a field trip to Amazonia last year. The toughest part of our job wasn't bagging the prey, it was dodging local authorities as we made our way back out. Cops down there believe in shoot first, shoot some more, then file a report about the corpses they "found."

• Glasswalker

• Illegal safaris are like shadowruns—your last job is your calling card. If you want to build clients, you have to prove that you have what it takes to go to the tough places. Places like Amazonia or the Ring of Fire. The rich clients want to go where it's dangerous to travel, then they want to successfully hunt there.

• Mika

The problem is more apparent in species that have not been around long enough to have gained rights. A significant number of Awakened species are sought after for live capture. In addition to the highly coveted sapient races, seadraka and barghests have been gaining a lot of attention on the black market. Seadraka have a number of unusual genetic rearrangements suggesting that they aren't a naturally occurring species, which has scientists curious. Barghests, though difficult to train, have become increasingly popular for security duties.

• I get a lot of requests to track down wodewose for corp scientists. The creatures have an unusual ability to carry metahuman diseases without being affected by them. The people I work for think that wodewose could be helpful in creating antibodies to modern diseases.

• DangerSensei

• Ditto for wild minotaur, but the bounty here is limited to females. There are at least 27 parabiological institutes worldwide offering better than 200K for a living female.

• Sticks

Any type of hunting is available if you're willing to take the risk and spend the money to make it happen. From time to time, Mr. Johnson may be looking for runners to escort a client who wants to try low-tech hunting. It's usually corporate bigwigs desperate to put some miles on their bows, but it might be a street runner or martial artist who has decided to go hand-to-hand with a bear on a bet. There are organizations that specialize in this type of thing. A group of former Jaguar Guards living in the Yucatan lead what they call Sangre Cazar. The only rule for these types of activities is you pay in advance.

• There's a BrightEdge offshoot down in Morocco that has been running combat tours through Cambodia. The idea is you face off against hostile native wildlife using only whatever implant weaponry you have. Turnout has been pretty high over the last two years. Of course, so has the casualty rate.

• Kane

The guide fee is only one of the tithes expected from modern hunters. With the increase of magic and spirits, religious beliefs have helped establish a culture of caring and respect for animals, especially in tribal regions. Any hunter who took game without thanking the spirits will need to be wary. Outsiders may pay double or more because their presence tends to upset the spirits watching over a flock.

The return of magic has also created a market for Awakened species. Some animals are hunted just for the meat. Sources tell me that peryton and wild satyr have both been used as special ingredients by top chefs. While the killing of those particular animals is often illegal, some of the new species can be hunted legally for food. Devil jack diamond steaks sell for 100 nuyen a plate outside of North America, making them the Kobe beef of the 21st century.

• Hunting sapients is no less obscene than hunting metahumans, but it happens. Scientists, even collectors, pay top nuyen for sapient creatures. The price goes up if you can bring it in alive.

• Glasswalker

• There are also people who just want to keep them as pets. The ultra rich try to show off to each other by acquiring unique possessions. Imagine bringing the CEO over to your mansion to show her the storm dolphin you've been keeping in a private pool.

• Dr. Spin

• Metahumans will hunt anything that presents a challenge. Sometimes we even hunt our neighbors—it pays the bills.

• Sticks

Sometimes parting out an animal is more profitable than selling the whole thing. Many ancient mystic remedies carry magical healing properties. Some of those remedies require rare animal parts that the sick party must wear or ingest. Stymphalian eggs and a mermaid's pituitary gland are both thought to be aphrodisiacs—



both are sold separately on the black market for hundreds of nuyen. Animal parts are also used as spell components in some magical traditions. Modernists frown on the practice because of the potential confusion with blood magic.

- PETA takes particular exception to the use of newly Awakened species as food. The organization has been known to boycott restaurants that sell dishes containing Awakened meat. Generally, the boycotts lead to a health services investigation. When the boycotts don't work, they get dirty: harassing the chefs and threatening violence against them and their families. A chef at Seattle's Blue Room had his car bombed last year when word leaked that his seafood surprise was actually meistersinger meat.

- Riser

Ivory is still considered a symbol of wealth, much to the displeasure of the elephants assassinated yearly for their tusks. Ivory is joined by saber-tooth cat tusks, wild satyr horns, and bandersnatch pelts as the most widely hunted animal parts. Moving animal parts and furs has been a long time staple of the Vory's criminal empire. The crime syndicate has built networks throughout the world dedicated to the safe passage of their material. Vladivostok is known to be the heart of the network, but it is unclear who actually runs the operation.

- Check the employee roster for Evo's shipping organization. I'm sure you'll find someone who can point you towards the smugglers.

- Mihoshi Oni

- Golden boar tusks are highly regarded as ingredients for telesma. Unfortunately there are no more than 800 of the species left in the world, so acquiring a tusk is rare indeed.

- Lyran

POACHERS

The largest problem in wildlife preservation is poaching, the theft of fish or game from protected areas. A poacher treats a wildlife preserve like the neighbor's farm. They take what they want and don't care what happens next. Poaching is dangerous to the environment. Popular hunting targets such as wolves help curb the growth of less hunted breeds such as squirrels or raccoon. Deer and their counterparts play a role in dispersing plant seeds throughout their habitat. If the species are wiped out, then the habitat can become unstable.

Hunting advocacy groups attempt to blame the problem on hostile Awakened creatures. A few bush tribes have bought into this philosophy. Under their jurisdictions, poachers are permitted to hunt the Awakened breeds with the intent that mundane breeds will prosper in their absence.

- It would take a fool to believe a poacher. Someone high up in the tribe must be getting paid by the poachers to smooth things out with their people.

- Haze

- African tribes are not always driven by money. With the constant struggle between the tribes, leaders often sacrifice their land in exchange for military support and weapons.

- Kane

Poachers are hunters with one fundamental difference. A hunter kills for sport, but a poacher kills for volume. Poachers are paid based on the number of animals they bring to market, while a hunter is paid for the quality or scarcity of his victims. Poachers hunt everything from wolves to bison. These aren't rare animals, but they will become rare if poaching isn't stopped. Except for green countries like Amazonia or Tasmania, governmental wildlife preserve agents don't have the manpower to stop poachers. Not all governments enforce their poaching laws.

- The government is part of the problem in Aztlan. High-ranked officials head several of the country's poaching rings. If the police get too close to the operation, then the officials pull them off the investigation. They have even been known to kill officers who do not cooperate.

- Marcos

- The terrorist group La Venta used evidence of corruption in the Department of Wildlife to justify the Cinco de Mayo massacre. Sixty-eight government employees were killed in Tenochtitlán when a Distrito Federal office building was bombed during an office party.

- Beaker

- I heard Cinco de Mayo was actually a professional hit on Aztech Senior VP Carmelita Rocha. She was supposed to put in an appearance at the party with members of the Wildlife Preservation Board, but she didn't show up.

- Riser

Animals used to stand a chance of avoiding poachers, but technology has made that impossible. Poachers have sophisticated traps to capture the animals. At times, these devices include military-grade weapons tested by poachers for various corporations. It's a sweetheart deal. The poachers get tougher weapons, while the corps get field testing. Poachers also form alliances with local smuggling syndicates, paying them off with weapons or corporate contacts to move poached fauna out of the area.

- Don't overlook the role of the pirates, especially in minor nations where we are what passes for law on the open seas. Poached goods move through pirate waters, sometimes carried by the pirates themselves and sometimes by corporate vessels that leave port without the poached goods and then make an exchange with one of our ships on the open sea.

- Kane

ANIMAL CONTROL

Most animal rights groups believe that all bounty hunting should be illegal, but you'll be glad that hunters are out there when you spot a loup garou hustling down Madison Avenue. Legal bounty hunting, or animal control, has made professions like the ratcatcher crucial; only today it's devil and demon rats that exterminators chase through attics.

The Awakening blurred the lines between hunting and pest control, as Awakened species often disrupted the food web, causing sudden overpopulation. Australia has the most problems with wild population. Most countries offer a reward to track down something that doesn't belong. Corporations sometimes offer in-





INCOMING FEED.....



centives to exterminate pests from their buildings as quickly and quietly as possible.

The more destructive paracritters can disrupt businesses and pose a threat to customers. These creatures often hold a fixed government bounty. In Australia, bounties are by the pound for smaller animals such as rabbits and rats and for each individual kill for larger predators. Quebec's Ministry of Wildlife has a standing bounty on all paranormal creatures from 50 nuyen for a devil rat to 100,000 nuyen for a wyvern.

- Legal or illegal, bounty hunting is contract work. You have to go to where the work is because there really isn't that much of it. The bounty hunter's holy grail is a steady job. When you find work, it could be a little thing like helping the corps track down one of their experiments that has gone missing. Other hunters are lucky enough to be contracted by corporations to serve as wildlife consultants.
- Traveler Jones

Being a bounty hunter doesn't necessarily mean you have to kill things. You're just as likely to be contracted to capture wildlife. Places like Korhogo along the Ivory Coast, Mumbai, and Muscat in the Arabian Sea are havens for dealers in rare creatures. Interested parties use live specimens for breeding, security, scientific research, and private collections or zoos.

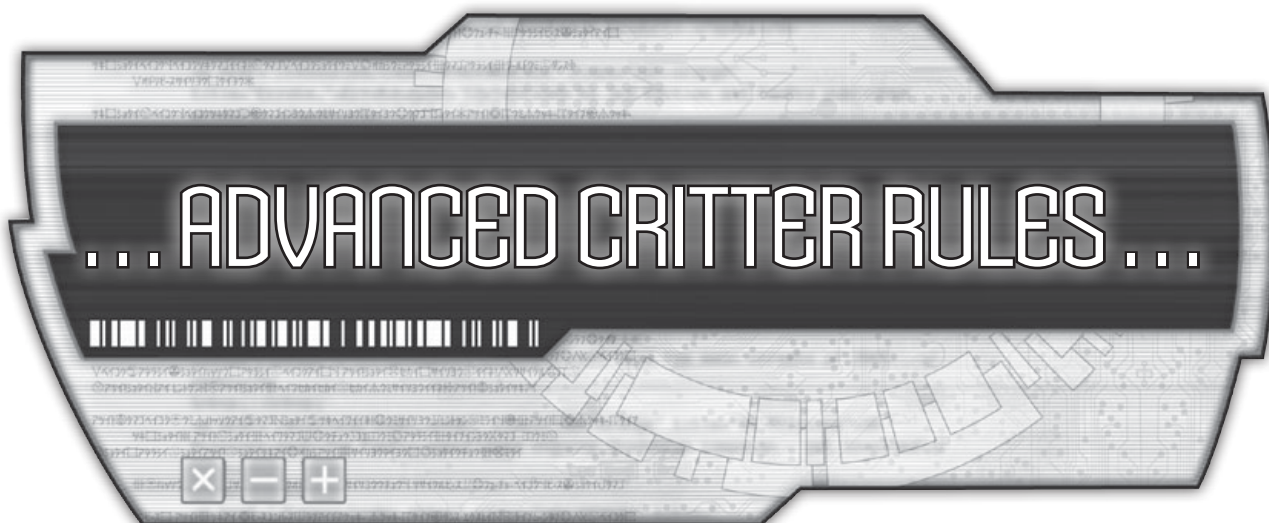
- The downside of live creatures is transporting them. Smuggling a crate of guns is nothing like transporting a hostile creature. If you can manage to keep it sedated, you still have to figure out how to keep it healthy and hidden during what could be several days of transportation. All this is before you even begin to consider border

patrols, rival hunters, or ecoterrorists, all of whom have a stake in seeing that you don't escape with your cargo.

- Turbo Bunny
- A majority of smugglers won't touch live cargo runs. There are simply too many risk factors involved. Bounty hunters make a habit of working with smuggler crews with whom they have an established personal relationship.
- Rigger X

This area of bounty hunting is not limited to capturing dangerous animals. There is a demand for fertilized embryos, which can be harvested in only one of two ways. Either you raid a facility breeding the type of creature you've been contracted to capture or you capture a pregnant creature in the wild. The latter is pretty tough to do, especially with highly sought after embryos like that of the lesser roc. A roc's nest is usually in a cliff face, far away from potential predators.

- Laos is teeming with animal genetics labs, especially near Salavan, where the villages are mostly under corporate control. Corporations lease the space from the Vietnamese protectorate in exchange for economic relief.
- Nephrite
- Hunts happen a lot closer to home than you might think. Corporations make a habit of housing specialized laboratories in the run-down sections of cities. You're more likely to find a top secret animal genetics lab in the heart of Redmond/Seattle than in the Congo. That's why it's front page news when a creature escapes.
- Butch



"Heel."

The hound immediately stopped its chase and ran back to Saremae. It padded softly to a stop and sat to her left. Hot breath billowed out across the animal trainer's leg, uncomfortably warm. Saremae knelt down beside the dog and fed him a treat as she ruffled the fur behind his ears. "Good boy." She stood back up and tapped a few buttons on the console. At the end of the yard, a drone wheeled out from the storage shed below. It was wrapped in ballistic gel and wearing a Knight Errant uniform. From the waist up, it resembled a patrol officer fairly accurately.

"Zeig!" she called out, and the hellhound tensed beside her. "Enfer!" It loped forward, swinging out in an arc, and fire began to build up around its jaw. Saremae tapped another button on the console, and sounds of gunfire echoed around them. The hound didn't stop; it continued the charge and belched out a long gout of fire at the uniform. Passing behind the drone officer, it belched again and turned back toward Saremae.

This was the second week that they'd been working with simulated combat noise. He was getting better. The first time she had fired blanks at the drone, the hound had cowered down next to her, afraid of the noise. Saremae worked with him first because he was the alpha in the pack. Once he was trained, the others would follow him instinctively and learn faster. At least, she hoped so. Behavioral studies with hellhounds were heavily biased, mostly because the authors liked their hounds and each pack had its own personality dynamics.

"Heel." She disabled the noise generators and gave him another scratch behind the ears for completing the task properly. Saremae looked down at the dog and smiled. "Good boy." She petted him some more until he barked twice, asking for the treat he was supposed to receive. The trainer held it out for him in an open hand. "Good boy."

Saremae walked the hound over to the side yard, where his pack was waiting for him, and then went back inside the building. She picked up her AR glasses on her way through the veterinary clinic to her office. When training her animals, it was always important that nothing come between her eyes and theirs. It was a small price to pay, and this gave her a legitimate excuse to not answer every commcall immediately. Scrolling through messages, Saremae stopped at one tagged from Clockwork and opened the AR window.

"Hey Sare—I'm looking to take up a new hobby. Do you have any leads on where I can find a dog that can sniff out technocritters?"

Even though she dealt with mostly paracritters, the call made sense. Saremae was much closer to the critter market than her friend. She placed a few calls of her own and began trying to find a hound.



RUNNING CRITTERS

Posted by **DangerSensei**

As long as we're talking about critters, I thought I'd give a brief rundown on some training tips and tactics I picked up from Eagle Security. As many of you may know, Eagle specializes in providing trained animals to their security clients. They're best known for paranormal critters, but they do a lot with normal critters and they're exploring the options for technocritters as well.

CORPORATE USE OF ANIMALS

All of the megas use animals to some extent. For the moment, I'll focus on security, since that's where runners often encounter animals (unless, of course, you're hired to extract a goldfish after a nasty custody battle—and yes, I did, and no, it wasn't fun). While a lot of attention gets paid to the paranormal critters, there is a strong demand for normal animals in the realm of security. There are three main varieties of animals used in mainstream corporate security. More experimental, cutting-edge applications are being explored, but for the moment the following are the ones you're most likely to see.

MUNDANE CRITTERS

The basic, plain vanilla critters are the ones you're likely to run into and by far the most common. Generally speaking, these animals are placed in situations where their natural behaviors can be exploited. Drug-sniffing dogs or horses used by mounted patrols, for example.

The decreasing costs of drones, compared against the costs of animal training, care, and handling, have made mechanical security measures a more attractive option for many smaller companies and the average homeowner. Drones have additional drawbacks, however, such as software and hardware maintenance. While a well-trained dog may provide up to ten years of security, a drone is often obsolete within three to five years.

In some cases, critters can even provide a legacy system—the first generation breeding and then training their own young in the new behaviors, and so on. This is often seen in swarms, mischiefs, and packs of animals that are more instinct-driven. Once a new behavior is introduced, the adults pass the behavior on to their offspring.

- The absolute weirdest example of this I've come across was a place that had a flock of peacocks nesting on their grounds. The birds screamed anytime something—a person, another large animal, or a vehicle—entered their territory. Effective alarm system—and damn near gave me a heart attack. The things sounded like women screaming for help, I kid you not.

- Mika

There are other benefits to using normal critters. In today's urban centers, living pets have been replaced by drones and VR companions. Those live pets that are still popular are often smaller and designed for living in dense urban housing enclaves. At the same time, the proliferation of drones—patrolling the streets, stocking store shelves, delivering packages, etc.—has instilled in society a familiarity with mechanical assistants. As such, casual thieves and city dwellers are often more accustomed to seeing a drone than an animal. That unfamiliarity makes critters more intimidating.

EAGLE SECURITY, DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL TRAINING AND DEPLOYMENT

Animals have been humanity's most loyal companions and fierce protectors for millennia. Thousands of years of selective breeding developed creatures designed for human needs—protection, companionship, labor, assistance. With modern times come modern methods of training, including the ability to customize a creature from its genes up to perfectly fulfill the desired role. At Eagle Security, we are leading the field in the training and placement of animals designed to complement our clients' security needs.

We believe in combining our patented training methods with the appropriate use of biological, genetic, or cybernetic enhancements. All clients receive access to our comprehensive library of animal care and training tutorials, and we provide around-the-clock call-in support with any purchase. Short-term and long-term leases are also available. For those looking for a comprehensive package, security consultations are available.

For more info, visit Eagle Security today!

Unaugmented critters also are immune to hacking or riggers' tricks, and they are much less bribable than metahuman security guards if properly trained.

- Hacking a home's CHN and turning off all the alarms, subverting the drones, and unlocking the doors doesn't mean squat if there's a yappy little ball of fuzz inside barking its head off when you try to tip-toe in.
- Glitch

Finally, regular critters are easy to procure and (comparatively) inexpensive. Many training programs have been around for decades, even centuries in some cases, and there's a large body of work devoted to critter care.

AUGMENTED CRITTERS

The next step is a logical progression, considering our obsession with improving our own bodies with bioware, cyberware, and genetweaks. Animals were the first testing ground for the technologies that metahumans take for granted today. Augmented critters come in a variety of mix-and-match flavors to suit every taste.

Unfortunately, there are some serious drawbacks to augmenting critters. One is the common problem with cyberpsychosis. Critters with cyberware tend to become more aggressive and prone to a variety of psychoses. This isn't necessarily a bad thing when you're talking security forces, but it can become a serious issue with critters that need to interact with the public—such as a drug-sniffing canine at a train station. A common side effect of the increased aggression is the difficulty with breeding behaviors, including savaging their own young. Augmented critters are almost always single-generation creations; each new generation needs to be augmented and trained anew.

Urgent Message...

Augmentations run the gamut from purely cosmetic to fully functioning biodrones. The costs to create, train, and maintain augmented critters make them much rarer, although they are often correspondingly more useful.

Generally speaking, it takes a specialized veterinary facility to service critters. Outside the larger corporations and the occasional paranoid crime lord, most companies and people don't have the resources to support a full operation like that. Accordingly, a number of corporations have sprung up to fill the niche, catering to mid-sized companies and the security-conscious wealthy. Telestrian is one example of an AA corp that provides full augmentation services, including breeding, training, placement, and ongoing maintenance.

- While normal animals are a threat to runners, augmented animals are just nasty. Genetweaked dogs with quick-acting venom in their saliva, biodrone tigers that can slice a troll open with one swipe of their claws, or animals with bone-lacing and orthoskin that can take a full shotgun burst and keep coming.
- Sticks
- It's a dangerous field. Cyberpsychosis is a nice clean technical term, but the reality is these creatures occasionally savage their handlers or turn on one another. Play with fire, you're going to get burned.
- Nephrine
- The well-bred, well-designed critters don't have nearly the problems as those put out by the slip-shod mass-market outlets or the black marketeers. Places like Telestrian and Parashield don't produce the crazy, uncontrollable beasts the media portrays.
- Butch
- Morality aside, augmented critters present a large liability to corporations. Insurance rates are through the roof if the corp uses cyber-critters on its grounds, which is why you see them only on extraterritorial property or places that don't exist "on paper."
- Mr. Bonds

PARANORMAL CRITTERS

While much attention is on paranormal critters, the truth is they make up only about a quarter of the critters out there. With that being said, they are valued for their paranormal abilities, many of which have been successfully integrated into security (and other) applications. One very valuable aspect is their ability to provide security against magical threats, but many of the more common paracritters in the security field have abilities that are effective deterrents against even mundane threats.

Paracritter training, medical care, and breeding are evolving fields. Several universities offer specialized programs, but the cutting-edge work is done in corporate facilities.

- Successful paranormal animal trainers are highly valued commodities. But extracting them can be a real bitch. And as you can imagine, their new employer has a lot on the line—last thing you want is your barghest trainer to have a grudge against Mother Corp.
- Sticks
- Hey, the real fun starts when you snatch a handler who insists on taking his critters with him. "I won't go without all my hellhounds" is

not what you want to hear in the middle of an extraction. Or worse, critters that frantically defend their handlers when anything happens. Corps don't fire (or terminate) paracritter trainers, not unless they want to throw away the investment in those critters, too ...

- Stone
- Some paracritters just don't reproduce well in captivity, or captive-bred ones are too expensive. Capturing live specimens in the wild is profitable, but natural populations have been impacted by the harvesting. The NAN all signed the Paranormal Species Protection Agreement back in '48. PSPA means you can't transport paranormal critters across the border without the appropriate permits and verification that they are from a captive-breeding program. It also restricts metahumans from a variety of other things, like hunting without a permit, intruding on breeding grounds, or harassing paranormal animals in the wild.
- Mika

HOUSING AND CARE

Corporations that use animals in their daily operations must provide adequate housing. This may be as simple as a couple of kennels placed in a modified break room or a hundred acres of landscaped grounds designed to imitate the animal's natural habitat. When coupled with built-in security measures, these large compounds can provide effective protection. However, no matter the size, they all must address specific issues: food storage and handling, safe housing for the animals, waste disposal, facilities for their equipment, drugs, or other supplies, and other "safety measures."

- Safety measures meaning that the corp has a place to lock up the animals if there's an issue. Like a soundproof kennel for barghests. Just in case.
- Sticks
- There has been experimentation in reducing the size of critter pens by providing "sensory overlays." The idea was that animals function better when they're less stressed, and that having fenced pens instead of free-roam space causes stress. Some research is attempting to plug the animals into specially designed simulations in full VR for their "rest" periods. Other research is investigating the options of sensory overlays for animals with cybereyes and ears. Neither approach has had much success, but the research is ongoing.
- Smiling Bandit

Generally speaking, only the most self-sufficient compounds or enclaves will have facilities designed for veterinary care, especially when working with paranormal or augmented critters. Corporations that provide these specialized critters also have facilities for providing veterinary care as an additional service to their clients. Often, animal handlers have training in basic vet-tech skills or access to an activesoft for rudimentary medical care. Augmented critters require more specialized care, especially when it comes to maintaining their implants.

- If a place has cyber-critters or biodrones, the best time to hit it can be when those critters have to be taken in for routine maintenance. Especially for biodrones, that can happen fairly frequently. If there's



an upgrade or patch they need, chances are all of them will need it. Unless they have on-site facilities—which is very rare—they'll have to tranquilize the critters and haul them off-site.

- Sticks

- Why bother waiting? A clever hacker can fabricate a mandatory service bulletin. Might not work for a megacorp that produces their critters in house, but it can be an effective tactic against the smaller corps who lease their critters ...

- Slamm-O!

Feeding can present certain challenges. Critters don't subsist on soy and other alternative food stuffs nearly as well as metahumans. Paranormals often have special dietary needs that require a certain amount of effort to fulfill. The corp needs a place for storing the food, and the handlers need to have the know-how on both feeding and food storage. Food is often incorporated into ongoing training work.

DOG VS. ASSAULT RIFLE: MAKING CRITTERS A VIABLE SECURITY TACTIC

When you've got drones and trolls that can mount full auto-cannons, many corps don't believe that a couple of critters can really augment their security. From what I saw at Eagle, where they use a lot of critters in their security plans, that's just not true. Critters can serve a variety of purposes and patch some security holes that metahuman, technological, and even magical security leave open.

One thing most security critters are trained in is evading gunfire and neutralizing targets with guns. For example, I observed the training of a pack of barghests. The animals learned to identify weapon-carrying metahumans, the sound of gunfire, or specific cues from their handlers. When they saw one of these triggers, rather than approaching directly, several of the pack would howl, and the others would circle around and attack while their "targets" were frozen. Likewise, their first attack almost always aimed for the arms. Other training techniques I observed included teaching the critters to run in unpredictable patterns, attack in groups, and even use the element of surprise to disable a target.

- Let's face it. A single animal against my assault rifle doesn't have much chance. But ten of those critters together mean that while I'm attempting to hit one, there are nine more coming at me. Pretty damn effective. And that's before you throw in some paracritters, like those damn oversized chickens. I hate those things.

- Marcos

- Sure, but how expensive is a pack of ten critters?

- Pistons

- Expensive. But consider that, unlike metahuman employees, they don't need any benefits, life insurance, or death benefits for dependents. There's no need for days off. No vacations. No complaining about the increased workload, no worrying that the security guard is watching AR porn instead of the front door. The critters don't accidentally tell their passwords to hookers, care about blackmail, or argue with the boss. They don't see a guy with a gun and think, "This

job isn't worth taking a bullet." In fact, trained guard critters don't generally know the meaning of "surrender."

Drones can be hacked and fooled with invisibility. Ever try sneaking past a dog while invisible? Didn't work, did it?

And it's a lot cheaper to get a couple of paranormal critters that will alert you to magic in the area than to pay for even one wage mage.

- Mr. Bonds

- Magic is a very good point to bring up. Wage mages cost corporations a lot of nuyen: education, salaries, benefit packages, perks. And they take a long time to mature—twenty or more years. Now, a paranormal critter with the ability to sense mana changes and react to them is far less expensive. Coupled with some Awakened ivy and glow sticks for the mundane guards, you've got a passable security setup that will stymie most mages.

- Kay St. Irregular

- Using critters for corporate functions like security has a practical limit. In the middle of downtown Seattle, it's not always wise. That's not to say the Aztechnology Pyramid doesn't have some nasty critters inside. But when you have offices or factories full of people, you have to balance the creature's value against the danger they present to your own employees and customers. Outside of the sprawl, corporations can get away with a lot more. Like having a pack of hellhounds running loose on the grounds during the night, rather than a security animal handler patrolling the grounds with a leashed barghest.

- Sticks

- The very things that make critters useful to corpsec also make them useful to shadowrunners. A trained barghest (coupled with cyberears on you and your crew) can freeze those security goons in their tracks, preventing them from calling for backup. Going into the barrens? Nothing makes an impression on gangsters like a leashed three-headed cerberus hound with corrosive saliva. A trained bandit can provide invaluable assistance to a B&E specialist.

- Mika

- Somehow, Mika, I can totally see you relying on a fat raccoon to do your work.

- Ma'fan

PUBLIC WORKS: ANIMALS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Critters continue to serve in public roles, although the prevalence of drones has decreased the numbers of critters visible to the public. Technology has its limitations, however. Some countries, like the Salish-Shidhe, actually prefer to use critters even when technology can provide equivalent results.

The most notable public service from critters—at least in terms of media coverage—is search and rescue, with military applications a close second. Dogs and other search-and-rescue critters can maneuver in rougher terrain than can drones and cost much less to maintain and operate, especially considering the less-than-optimal conditions where most search-and-rescue operations take place.

I've included a few examples, but there are hundreds of ways that critters serve the public's interest.



INCOMING FEED.....



ADVANCED CRITTER RULES.....

Mounted Patrols (Portland, Tír Tairngire)

The Tír has a long tradition of using mounted police. These officers ride horses as they patrol the streets of downtown Portland. Enormously popular with tourists, the police officers and their horses provide a variety of public services, from giving directions to escorting pedestrians across busy streets. Beyond their public face, however, the mounted patrol make efficient and formidable use of their horses in riot control situations and apprehending thieves. The horses are also trained to assist their metahuman riders in confrontations, making them a fearsome combination. The horses wear modified armor designed to provide protection and resemble heraldic barding.

Search and Rescue (Salish-Shidhe)

Most nations with wilderness areas have some form of search-and-rescue units. In the Salish-Shidhe, they have three dedicated groups: Mountain, Aquatic, and All-Terrain. A large number of mountain climbers have difficulties every year in the Salish-Shidhe territory, and the Mountain Unit uses artnwerre and griffins in addition to dogs to search for lost climbers and avalanche victims. The Aquatic Unit is often deployed to search for survivors or the remains of victims after boating accidents in Puget Sound. It has had great success using trained dolphins and sea lions. The All-Terrain Unit is called in for searches in both urban and wilderness environments. It uses artnwerre, fenrir wolves, and mundane dogs. The unit is also called in by Salish-Shidhe police to search for criminals and missing persons.

Bird Control (CAS Military)

Flocks of birds represent a common hazard on airport landing strips. Drones can be somewhat effective, but not without problems of their own—especially when dealing with storm crows or other paranormals. It's common practice for falconers to hire themselves and their birds out to hunt flocks of birds in and around airfields. A few well-trained falcons or other birds of prey can dispatch a nuisance flock in a day or two. Falconers primarily use normal birds, although the CAS military (among others) has been experimenting with training thunderbirds and greater thunderbirds to hunt different kinds of airborne nuisances: t-bird smugglers and unauthorized drones.

Pest Control (Seattle, UCAS)

Most urban sprawls have a significant vermin problem, especially with vermin that have no natural predators or carry diseases transmittable to metahumanity. Examples include the devil rat, its cousin the demon rat, and aerial vermin like pigeons and starlings, which cause massive problems for air traffic and drones. Entire departments have been created to deal with these vermin control issues. Since many of these new breeds of vermin are resistant to the pesticides once used and canny enough to avoid traps, public agencies have fallen back on traditional methods of control. Government-employed Pest Management Specialists (a.k.a. "Rat-Catchers") are deployed with service animals to exterminate infestations. These animals range from specially bred "rat-dogs" to gomatia, which many Rat-Catchers swear by since they are "too dumb to know better" when catching vermin. Falconers are also in high demand in urban centers to deal with flocks of pigeons and other pest bird species.

Drug and Contraband Searches (Heathrow, London)

Airport security and customs inspectors frequently use trained critters to search baggage and metahumans for contraband. While dogs continue to be the critter of choice, a variety of paracritters have been successfully used, including bandits and artnwerre. These critters are employed behind the scenes, while the more “public-friendly” ones are taken through crowds to identify metahumans with contraband. Typically, these critters are trained to identify specific drugs through their highly sensitive sense of smell. When going through security, every metahuman must pass by one or more of these drug-sniffing critters.

- I've come across recent rumors about using technocritters at airports and around sensitive, secured areas, both public and corporate. Anyone know anything about that?

- Snopes

- It's a very new field. The preliminary research suggests that technocritters may be trained to identify technomancers or the presence of sprites or Resonance beings in nearby nodes. The issues, of course, are that technocritters are extremely rare, and finding animal trainers who are also technomancers is like the proverbial needle-in-the-haystack. It also appears that cloning or using artificial wombs or surrogate animals doesn't reproduce the techno-abilities of the animals, rather like in humans. However, given how quickly many animals reproduce and mature, I believe that it will be viable technology within a matter of years.

- Smiling Bandit

- Given how desperate many corporations and militaries are to identify technomancer and sprite threats to their systems, I'd bet there's a lot of funding in this research.

- Marcos

- I ran into one of these animals. Even though I was running “silent,” so to speak, it still caught my ... scent? I had to sever my connection to the Resonance completely. If they do manage to train these animals and use them, traveling as a technomancer will get much, much more dangerous.

- Netcat

- But it couldn't find you once you'd severed your connection?

- Nephrine

- No. But as you know, it takes hours to re-establish the connection. And the scary part was that I wasn't accessing the Matrix when it spotted me, I was simply e-sensing the area. I'm not worried for myself, but I worry about all those technos who don't know how to ‘hide,’ so to speak. If the corps figure this stuff out, their lives are going to be much more dangerous.

- Netcat

PETS

Critters have been companions to metahumanity ever since the first little cave-boy asked his mama and daddy for that cute little wolf-puppy. Fast forward a few millennia, and while things have changed, there is still a thriving market for live pets. Sure, drones exist that mimic live critters and don't require daily walks or litter changes. But they are still drones without the level of socialization, empathy, or comfort a live companion can provide.

For the lower class, pets might be constrained to a free kitten or puppy picked up from a humane society. The middle class can afford many more options, including cloned pure-bred critters, mass-produced genetweaked pets, or even some of the paranormal pets that have become popular. For those with even more discretionary nuyen, there are customized chimera critters, rare and exotic paranormals, or even augmented critters.

Regulations and laws governing the breeding, sale, and ownership of live critters vary by municipality. In the NAN, for example, there are comprehensive laws that differentiate between domestic versus wild critters as well as treaties between the different nations that govern the import and export of live animals. In the UCAS, each jurisdiction is responsible for creating and enforcing its own regulations. As a rule of thumb, domesticated pets (birds, cats, dogs, etc.) and livestock (cows, horses, pigs, sheep, etc.) can be kept in rural areas with little or no regulations, while urban areas often require licenses and registration fees and even restrict ownership. Many sprawls require additional licenses to own fertile—or breeding stock—critters. Paranormals face even more restrictions, especially those with harmful or dangerous abilities. Keeping a paranormal critter, with a few exceptions, requires significant licenses and handling certificates.

- In Aztlan, it's fairly common for the middle and upper classes to give their children an animal they consider their nahualli; their animal-spirit twin. Learning to control your nahualli is a sign of strength and self-control, especially for Aztech magicians. The upper classes tend to take their nahualli everywhere with them. Makes a plane ride really fun when you're sharing the first-class cabin with a lady and her leashed jaguar. Aztechnology caters to this custom as well, and most Aztechnology housing enclaves and arcologies have extensive veterinary facilities, animal day cares, and animal supply stores.

- Marcos

- Of course, if you're ever extracting an Azzie employee, double-check that they don't have one of these nahualli. They won't leave without it. Probably for good reason; I've heard rumors that the nahualli can be used to ritually track someone.

- Sticks

- In the PCC, you can buy some paracritters legally, but the list is fairly short. Same with wild animals like wolves, eagles, or big cats. Unless you're an adept or shaman, that is. Animal adepts can own whatever they like, even in the heart of the sprawls. Seeing a person walking down the street with a puma or wolf isn't uncommon.

- Lyran

- Whereas in Seattle, you need to have a license to own anything cat-sized or bigger, anything imported, or paranormal or augmented.



INCOMING FEED.....



ADVANCED CRITTER RULES.....

There are regulations on where those critters can go, and landlords and housing communities have complete discretion on if they'll allow any live critters in the complex or neighborhood. Most pets are required to have a RFID tag in them, broadcasting their owner's information and their status for immunizations, being spayed/neutered/sterile, and licensing. Most pet owners also use the tags to keep track of their pets in case they escape. Traffic would probably stop if a guy with a "wild" animal walked down the sidewalk, and the police would be there in two heartbeats. Dogs are common, as are some of the domesticated paranormals: the gomatia, the pretty little African parrots, and the like. Of course, those rules are out the window for the rich. It isn't uncommon to see some corp princess with her designer glowing pink-feathered fluff-ball or a corp exec with an augmented German Shepherd sitting in the members-only restaurants or clubs.

• Kat o'Nine Tales

• This works both ways for runners. I know some runners who keep pets simply for companionship—really; it's probably the only relationship they can't screw up. I know there are others who keep them as tools because they're useful, whether as a guard critter for a safehouse, surveillance (pigeon biodrones are amazing), or another fang/claw/beak in a fight.

• Ma'fan

• And then there are those animals who keep you as a pet. Damn blackberry cats.

• Winterhawk

Buying a pet can be as simple as going to an online store, entering your preferences, and paying the fees, and then depending on availability, your new little bundle of fur/feathers/scales will be delivered to your doorstep. For those who like to impulse buy, many shopping centers have pet stores where the selection is limited to the most popular pets, but there is instant gratification. More exotic creatures can be found in upper-class establishments devoted to live critters. For those wanting a trained pet, companies exist in most major cities that can provide basic critters pre-trained or take orders and deliver a customized companion within a matter of weeks or months.

Getting a critter that is restricted or flat-out illegal is possible. Black markets cater to every need, from security-trained hellhounds stolen from corporate property to illegally imported paranormals.

Of course, that's assuming you can find a landlord who will let you have a live animal. Little ones, like fish or small birds, rodents, and lizards—basically anything that can be kept in a small cage—aren't too big of a deal. Traditional pets, like cats, small dogs, ferrets, and alufye, and the sort, often require a deposit or may be banned altogether. You'll be hard pressed to find an apartment that allows larger pets—you're pretty much going to be looking for homes in suburbia or a rural area. Ditto for livestock like sheep or horses—that's why there are farms and boarding stables. Some paranormals are easy to find housing for, but the vast majority aren't going to be allowed in a rental property or by a homeowners' association. That goes for augmented critters too, especially those with dangerous augmentations. Easy rule of thumb: if you can buy

it at the mall pet shop, it'll probably be okay. If you're getting it at a black market in the middle of the barrens, don't take it to your downtown apartment. The exceptions are those living in a luxury neighborhood, where money buys anything, or those living in the barrens, where no one cares what you do.

- The black market trade in live critters is a lucrative business. If you're hitting a facility with trained hellhounds, you can make a huge profit if you take one or more of those critters with you and know the right places to unload them.

- Stone

- I knew a runner once who tried to keep a stolen hellhound. A few skin grafts and new homes later, he wised up and sold it. Remember, folks: animals are not drones. Keeping one isn't a matter of reprogramming it to accept a new Access ID.

- Pistons

GAME INFORMATION

There are three generic classes of critters: Paranormal, Emergent, and Mundane. Similar to their metahuman counterparts, Paranormal critters have a Magic attribute, Emergent critters have a Resonance attribute, and Mundane critters have neither. These classifications limit what powers are available to them. Just as a technomancer cannot have a Magic attribute, Emergent critters cannot utilize Paranormal critter powers and vice versa. Once a critter has expressed either Paranormal or Emergent qualities, they may never utilize powers from the other category. This includes critters which may have lost their Magic or Resonance attributes due to implantation or Essence loss.

The Sixth World has also seen the rise of entities that go beyond the separation of animal, vegetable, and mineral with technology-based critters such as Feral AIs and mana-based critters like Spirits. While AIs and Spirits may exhibit similar characteristics and share powers with their flesh-and-blood counterparts, they are inherently different. Due to the lack of a central nervous system, they are incapable of receiving AR feeds—though AIs can overcome this through VR.

SAPIENCE

Beyond these three basic classifications, critters can be divided into sapient and non-sapient. Beings with the Sapience power have developed cognitive functions and self-awareness on par with metahumanity. This level of consciousness allows critters to learn and react at the same level as a metahuman. It is important to note that Sapience does not grant a metahuman perspective unless the being was raised in a metahuman culture. Sapient creatures may not have learned to respond to threats the same way, and they can have truly alien perspectives. Sprites and insect spirits are both examples of sapient critters which do not respond with standard metahuman reactions.

Critters without the Sapience power are still capable of intelligent thought, but this intelligence works on a drastically different scale. These creatures lack direct consciousness and are incapable of independent skill improvement. Examples of non-sapient intelligence are provided.

Non-sapient critters are considered Unaware of any skill that they do not possess. They cannot default on skills. Gamemasters

NON-SAPIENT INTELLIGENCE LEVELS

Logic	Characteristics
0	Reacts entirely by instinct
1	Can discern between individuals or objects
2	Can lay simple traps or ambushes, can navigate simple mazes
3	Can open a door or mimic some other physical action after seeing it
4	Simple tool use/problem solving
5	Able to learn and use limited languages to communicate simple concepts
6	Complex tool use/problem solving
7	Highly developed pattern recognition and analysis on a subconscious level



are encouraged to raise or lower skill ratings for critters to reflect the individual critter's aptitude in comparison to others of its species. Skills should not be reduced to zero. Critters may also be trained to complete tasks or improve their natural skills (Animal Training, p. 35).

CRITTER ATTRIBUTES

Critters are measured on the same scale as metahumans, which means they can be perceived as amazingly fragile or vastly strong in comparison. Critters with a Body attribute of 0 are unable to soak damage and are immediately destroyed if successfully struck. (Note that many insects with a Body of 0 act as Swarms. See *Swarms*, p. 25, for details.) Likewise, critters with a Strength of 0 are able to move their own body mass but do not approach the strength of even the weakest infant. If a critter has an attribute of 0, it does not add dice for the linked attribute in any tests or skills related to that attribute.

PARANORMAL CRITTERS

The animal kingdom was just as affected by the Awakening as metahumanity. Breeds of critters believed to have been extinct expressed side by side with their non-Awakened counterparts the way that Goblinization led to orks and humans being born into the same families. Awakened critters or paracritters have several traits that are shared across every species. All paranormal critters are able to utilize certain powers without higher-level cognitive abilities. Only paracritters with the Sapience power are able to select the Adept, Mystic Adept, or Magician qualities. Without one of these qualities, the critter cannot initiate or increase its Magic attribute. In-depth information about paranormal critters can be found on p. 100.

EMERGENT CRITTERS

Emergent critters, sometimes known as technocritters, are creatures which emerged alongside metahumanity and expressed similar Resonant abilities as technomancers. All Emergent critters have a Resonance attribute, and many of them have Emergent powers. Like technomancers, an Emergent critter's Resonance attribute is reduced by implants or gene therapy. When exposed

to Resonance wells, Emergent critters gain a positive dice pool modifier to all tests related to their Matrix or Emergent abilities. Conversely, there are negative dice pool modifiers when exposed to Dissonance wells.

There are no known Emergent critters linked to the Dissonance. Complete information about Emergent critters can be found on p. 189.

MUNDANE CRITTERS

While classified as Mundane, these critters are just as deadly as their Paranormal and Emergent counterparts. Mundane critters are animals which have evolved, either naturally or through metahuman influence, without expressing metagenic characteristics in line with Awakened or Emergent beings. They are the most common critters, and they are regularly used by scientists for medtech augmentations. Many of the clinical trials for bioware and genetic modification were implemented and perfected on Mundane critters before metahuman trials.

Following these trials, scientists discovered that certain techniques were simpler and faster to replicate on critters. The time requirements for genetech and bioware growth are halved for small mammals, reptiles, birds, and insects (smaller than a house cat). Additionally, the nuyen cost is reduced by 20 percent.

SWARMS AND MISCHIEFS

Some animals naturally group together into social groups for survival and hunting. Depending on the size of the individual creature, the groups are referred to as Swarms or Mischiefs. The population of the group will determine the Group Rating. If the population falls beneath the threshold for a rating, the Group Rating is reduced. If a Group Rating 5 Mischief has a population of 52 and loses 6 members, it becomes a Group Rating 4 Mischief with a population of 46.

Swarm Characteristics

All Swarms, independent of size or type, have similar characteristics and limitations. The base population must be non-sapient and have the Gestalt Consciousness power. Individual wound modifiers are not assigned to the population of the Swarm; see the descriptions of Swarms and Mischiefs for rules on damaging Swarms. When attacking, the Group Rating acts as a positive dice pool modifier to attack. Groups are able to attack multiple targets, dividing their dice pools as normal. The Damage Value of physical attacks is increased by the Group Rating. The Group Rating also serves as a positive dice pool modifier for all skill tests, and it substitutes for the ability to use Teamwork Tests.

The Group Rating is capped by the Essence of the creature, making biodrone Swarms non-viable for extensive implantations.

Swarms

Composed of insects and small arthropods, Swarms increase their population geometrically. The base size of a Swarm is five critters, and the population doubles for each point of rating. The Body rating of a Swarm is equal to the Group Rating. This is used for Damage Resistance Tests. Due to the size of the base critters, Swarms cannot be targeted by most direct attacks.

GROUP RATING

Rating	Swarm	Mischief
1	5	3
2	10	6
3	20	12
4	40	24
5	80	48
6	160	96

Area of effect attacks such as explosions and spells reduce the Group Rating, based on the final damage dealt after Damage Resistance Tests.

When a Swarm attacks or uses a skill, it is treated as a single creature. The Swarm does not provide a Friends in Melee bonus. Against a melee attack, the defender may defend as usual. Characters wearing environmentally sealed armor or clothing are immune to normal attacks by Swarms. Every net hit by a Swarm is counted as a single dose of venom or toxin (if applicable). At the gamemaster's discretion, characters wearing heavy clothing or armor may gain 1 to 3 bonus dice on their Toxin Resistance Test. For non-venom attacks, defenders use half their Impact armor rating on their Damage Resistance Test.

Glasswalker is on safari with Marcos and his team in Africa when he comes under attack by a Swarm of bees. He detonates a fireball for 9P amidst a Group 6 Swarm of bees. The Swarm rolls its Body to soak damage, reducing the DV to 5. The Group Rating is reduced from 6 to 1 as the population is devastated by the blast.

Mischiefs

Mischiefs are composed of critters larger than insects up to the size of a house cat. Examples include bats, birds, rats, and other rodents. Mischief populations begin with a base of three and double in population with each increase in Group Rating. The Body rating of a Mischief is equal to the Group Rating + 2. Single-target attacks are viable, but they will not noticeably diminish the size of large Mischiefs.

Direct attacks diminish the population of the Mischief by one-quarter (round down) of the modified DV after damage has been soaked. Area-of-effect attacks reduce the Group Rating by half the modified DV.

Marcos and his team are camped in the Saharan basin when a Mischief of bats flies through the camp looking to feed. He opens fire with his pistol as he moves across the camp towards shelter. The pistol's modified DV is 7P, which the Mischief reduces to 4P after the damage soak. One of the bats falls to the ground, as the ex-ex rounds tear through the cloud of fur and wings. It's going to be a long night for Marcos.

Mischiefs are treated as a single creature for skill use and attacks. Like Swarms, they do not provide Friends in Melee bonuses. Against a melee attack, the defender may defend as usual. Every net hit by a Mischief is counted as a single dose of venom or toxin (if applicable). At the gamemaster's discretion, characters wearing heavy clothing or armor may gain 1 to 3 bonus dice on their Toxin Resistance Test. For non-venom attacks, defenders use their full Impact armor rating on their Damage Resistance Test.

Paranormal Swarms

Just as a Swarm becomes more dangerous with a higher population, Paranormal Swarms grow more powerful. The Magic of a Paranormal Swarm is equal to the Group Rating + 1. Large Swarms are able to exceed the normal limitation on Magic of 6. Paranormal Swarms must remain within (Magic x 2) meters of each other. If a group leaves this distance, they are treated as a Swarm with a Group Rating based on their local population. The modified Magic is used to determine the effect of all Paranormal powers. Paranormal Mischiefs use the same rules as Paranormal Swarms, except that their Magic attribute is equal to Group Rating + Magic of an individual creature.

Emerged Swarms and Mischiefs

Due to the rarity of Emergent beings (technomancers and technocritters alike), Swarms and Mischiefs consisting solely of Emergent critters of the same species are extremely rare. Although rules are given for completeness, gamemasters should keep this in mind when confronting their players with such Resonance assemblies (especially given the rarity of area weapons in cyberspace which are required to combat Swarms or Mischiefs). Apart from its physical form, which can operate like any Mundane Swarm (p. 25), a collective of Emergent critters can interface with one another to form a digital Swarm Network, which increases the Resonance of each individual by the Swarm rating (p. 25). For rules purposes, each member of the Swarm Network still counts as its own persona. Each member of the Swarm must be targeted individually in cybercombat.

Swarms and Mischiefs of technocritters cooperate closely, which grants all members an additional bonus equal to the Swarm rating on all Matrix Tests (including cybercombat). They do not, however, receive any additional Teamwork (p. 65, *SR4A*) bonuses.

Swarms are not limited to a Resonance attribute of 6. Instead, they are unable to maintain a Group Rating larger than (Intuition + Logic) x 2. When a Swarm's population reaches this level, it divides into multiple Swarms, each with a maximum Rating of (Intuition + Logic) x 2. The Swarm generally splits into two groups with equal Group Ratings, though at gamemaster discretion it can divide into multiple groups with uneven distribution.

Optional Rule: More Powerful Swarms

As a Swarm develops, it begins to manifest additional powers. For every three points of rating, the Swarm develops one additional critter power. This power is determined by the gamemaster, and it should be in line with the Swarm's abilities and purpose. Powers must be Mundane or the same classification as the base creature. Suggested powers include Direction Sense or Energy Aura. Using this rule, it is possible for a Swarm to be given Sapience. This would be a single driving group consciousness rather than individual awareness.

SAMPLE EMERGENT SWARM

An Aztechnology researcher is working with two Emergent Swarms to develop a larger Swarm. She forces two Group 4 Swarms of wasps into cohabitation. (The wasps have an Intuition of 2 and Logic of 1.) The Swarms combine together as their networks mesh, and she has a Group 5 Swarm with a Resonance attribute of 6.

Once satisfied that the network is stable, she doubles the size again, introducing a Group 5 Swarm. Again the Swarm grows, increasing to a Group 6 Swarm with a Resonance attribute of 7. This is the maximum size that the Swarm can hold its network together (Intuition 2 + Logic 1 doubled = 6). If the researcher introduced another Swarm, they would be incapable of successfully merging.

Optional Rule: Dealing With Packs

Packs of wolves and similar-sized non-sapient critters are best managed as Grunts with the alpha as the Lieutenant. Gamemasters who want to demonstrate the "pack mind" can apply the Gestalt Consciousness power to the group. Treat the pack as having a +1 dice pool modifier to all tests for every three members, up to a maximum of +4. Packs traditionally work together to take down prey, and they can use Teamwork Tests to provide bonus dice in combat. Trained packs have additional bonuses (see p. 37).

CRITTER AUGMENTATIONS

Technology has developed ways to make critters more useful to metahumanity and, in some cases, more deadly. Augmented Critters are simply critters with implants. The implant depends on the expected service of the critter, and they can range from senseware to cyberweapons. Chimeric Critters and Warforms are genetically engineered through splicing DNA from multiple species or selective breeding, respectively, and they serve as pinnacles of science for further augmentation. Biodrones are augmented critters with the necessary implants for a rigger to jump in directly and control the critter as a flesh-and-blood drone.

Due to the harmful nature of implants on Magic and Resonance abilities, most critters that have cybernetic or bioware implants are Mundane. In addition to this self-imposed restriction, researchers have discovered that non-sapient critters cannot adapt to changes in their bodies and neurochemistry, resulting in acute psychological scarring. To limit the mental trauma, it is common to utilize simsense conditioning techniques and minimally invasive implants.

CRITTER IMPLANTS

Extensive experimentation has been done on critters for biocompatibility and usefulness. Due to limitations in awareness and intelligence, many cybernetic implants are non-viable because the critter does not have the cognitive ability to utilize the implant. Other implants—such as orientation goads—are implanted to make controlling a biodrone easier. Despite the ability to add enhanced senses through warform and chimeric modifications,

INCOMING FEED.....



certain cyber and bioware options are cheaper for single biodrones that need a specific sense to be viable for mission parameters. Except where noted, the Essence and nuyen costs for implants are identical to metahuman augmentations.

CRITTER PSYCHOSES

Because non-sapient critter psychology is limited, critters suffer from psychoses and violent behavior with implantation. For every full point of Essence loss due to implants or gene therapy, apply a -2 dice pool modifier to any attempts to train or handle the critter. The simsense conditioning used in the VGI process will reduce these penalties to -1 per full point of Essence loss. Critters with more than 3 points of Essence loss cannot be trained beyond instinctive commands.

An alternative that has been discovered for critters that are overcome with critter psychoses is to upload an Agent into the biodrone. The Agent monitors the critter's neurochemistry for rage indicators. If the biodrone becomes enraged or deviates from its instructions, the Agent takes control of the stirrup interface. This solution is not 100 percent effective, as it requires the Agent to recognize the problem, but it does allow the biodrone to function using the critter's instincts and senses. If the biodrone does not have a stirrup interface implant, the Agent is incapable of overriding the biodrone.

The invasive nature of cyber and bioware implantation and scarring can destroy the connections between social animals and break pack and Swarm bonds. VGI must be used for implantation in Swarms and Mischiefs to avoid losing the Gestalt Consciousness power from these critters. The Group Rating can never exceed the Essence of the critter population. Additionally, all members of the Swarm must have identical implants to function collectively.

WARFORMS

Genetically engineered creatures, Warforms are the product of selective breeding and genetic cleansing. Warforms are the product of critter eugenics programs. Unlike Chimerics, they are a single creature without DNA or genetic coding from other species. When bred with other Warforms that have been modified the same way, there is roughly a 50 percent success rate in passing on the positive genetic traits. Crossbreeding Warforms bred for different traits has been successful, and this leads to a broader genetic base for further pairings.

Warforms are capable of accepting up to six major genetic modifications. As genetically perfected versions of baseline critters, Warforms are capable of accepting standard bioware, though cultured is more often used. Corporate research facilities usually store the genetic sequences for finished Warforms to allow for cloning rather than continued breeding. After successful cloning, many Warforms are further augmented through implantation and training.

Costs for Warforms are equal to double the base creature's cost plus 30 percent per genetic modification. These costs presume a standard genetic model which has already been produced. The research and development of a brand new Warform is astronomically higher. As with any critter, a Warform must still be trained per normal rules.

ADVANCED CRITTER RULES.....

EXAMPLE WARFORM

From a grizzly bear (p. 92), apply Attribute Enhancement (Body), Attribute Enhancement (Agility), Attribute Enhancement (Reaction), Attribute Enhancement (Strength), Skill Enhancement (Climbing), and Skill Enhancement (Unarmed Combat).

**Warform Grizzly Bear
(28,500 nuyen Untrained)**

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
14	6	6	15	3	3	2	3	0	6	9	1

Movement: 15/45

Skills: Climbing 4, Intimidation 2, Perception 3, Running 2, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 8P, AP 0)

SAMPLE CHIMERIC

Begin with a great cat (p. 299, SR4A) and then apply Chimeric Ability (Venom), Chimeric Ability (Spidersilk), Potent Venom, Skill Enhancement (Unarmed Combat), and Attribute Enhancement (Agility).

Spider Cat (24,500 nuyen Untrained)

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
6	8	4	5	3	3	2	3	4	6	7	2

Movement: 10/60

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 2, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 6

Powers: Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 5P, AP 0), Spidersilk, Venom (DV 9)

CHIMERIC CRITTERS

Genetically modified to have traits inconsistent with their species, Chimerics are produced by splicing genetic code from multiple species together. Modifications of an existing characteristic are simpler and have fewer permanent side effects. Introducing new traits can have additional side effects and an increased Essence cost. The genetic tampering in Chimerics makes them unsuitable for Swarms or Mischiefs.

All Chimerics are sterile. They are able to accept three transgenic modifications and two phenotype adjustments before becoming non-viable. Like Warforms, the DNA sequence for Chimerics is stored in labs to permit the cloning of effective critters. Because each Chimeric is a unique strain, all bioware must be cultured before implantation. This increases the cost of bioware implants, but Chimerics do not receive the standard Essence reductions for cultured bioware.

Costs for Chimerics are triple the base creature cost plus 30 percent for each type of genetic modification and 50 percent for each Chimeric ability. These costs presume that a viable sample has already been produced. The research and development of an untested new Chimeric is much higher.

GENETIC MODIFICATIONS

Below is a list of standard genetic modifications used for Warforms and Chimerics. Unless specifically mentioned, a power cannot be chosen more than once. These modifications are all in addition to any augmentations that can be applied to metahumans. For example, a spider cat (see sidebar) can be further modified with genetic optimization and muscle toner.

Attribute Enhancement (Mundane)

Bred or engineered for specific traits, the creature is remarkably stronger or faster than an average specimen of its species. Increase one of the base critter's attributes by 50 percent (round up). This modification can be selected multiple times but only once per attribute.

Skill Enhancement (Mundane)

The creature's temperament reinforces a specific ability in the creature. Increase a natural skill of the critter by 2. This modification can be selected multiple times but only once per skill.

Thicker Hide (Mundane)

The creature's hide is substantially thicker and more durable than others of its species. Increase the Armor Value of the critter's armor by 50 percent (round up). This modification may be selected only once and applied only to critters with natural armor. Critters with Hardened Armor may not have this modification.

Pheromone Coding (Mundane)

Critters with this ability have been genetically programmed to be more receptive to a particular scent and to include that individual into the social unit. The handler or trainer of the critter must have enhanced pheromones to ensure a unique scent, but all Training and Handling tests receive a dice pool modifier equal to the rating of the enhanced pheromones.

Potent Venom (Mundane)

Whether it's a bite or a stinger, the venom of the creature is more lethal. Increase the Power of the critter's venom by 50 percent (round up). This modification may be selected only once and applied only to critters with natural venom.

Chimeric Ability (Mundane)

Due to DNA splicing, the Chimeric has abilities that its species does not normally possess. The creature becomes sterile. Choose one Mundane power for the Chimeric to gain. Sapience and Gestalt Consciousness cannot be granted to a critter through this modification. If the Mundane power has a rating, it is equal to the most relevant attribute. This modification cannot be applied to Warforms.

BIODRONES

The next generation of augmented critters, biodrones are fully rigger-enabled and capable of independent, instinctive responses or directed control. Most biodrones are equipped with senseware or a CAST system so that sensory information can be fed to security systems. As with most cyberware, a biodrone's implants are all wireless, though many companies opt to disable the feature and use an implanted commlink for added security. The primary setback to biodrones is the time it takes to grow rather than build a drone. Researchers have developed techniques to streamline the process.

Vat Growth Integration (VGI)

Using a combination of nanosurgery for implantation and simsense technology to aid in brain development, VGI accelerates the biodrone cloning process. Similar to Warform DNA sequences, the exact schema for a set of implants must be carefully laid out before the VGI process begins. Further modification and implantation after the VGI process is terminal to the creature. Developing a VGI process is expensive both in the terms of computer and human resources and in the amount of genetic material and time wasted through failure (dead critters).

A creature undergoing VGI receives a 10 percent discount on the Essence cost of all implants and suffers diminished cyberpsychoses effects due to the simsense conditioning it receives during gestation and development. The VGI process also enables the development of Swarm populations at a linear cost, despite the geometric population increases for higher-rating Swarms.

The cost for a Swarm or Mischief is equal to the cost of a single critter multiplied by the Group Rating and then multiplied by the base population of the group.

Standard cyberware clinics cannot perform VGI processes. Beta and delta clinics are needed for the nanotech. The base cost for developing a VGI formula for implantation is 50,000 nuyen and higher for more complex designs. Developing VGI formulas for Swarms and Mischiefs increases the cost by a factor of 10. These formulas are highly guarded corporate secrets and not generally available on the open market.

The Hive (see sample biodrone below) is implanted with an Auto-Injector (one-shot), Cyberglance, and Orientation Goad for a total cost of 1,700 nuyen plus the contents of the gland and injector. Swarms have a base population of 5, so purchasing a Group 1 Swarm costs 8,500 nuyen in addition to the contents of the gland. A Group 6 Swarm would cost 51,000 nuyen (1,700 nuyen \times 6 \times 5) before filling the glands.

An identical Swarm developed without using VGI would cost 8,500 nuyen for a Group 1 Swarm or 272,000 nuyen for a Group 6 Swarm. (1,700 nuyen \times 160 population)

Rigging Biodrones

The process of rigging a biodrone requires extensive training in order to gain the full benefits of the biological interface. Often riggers who are untrained in dealing with biodrones treat the animals as living, breathing robots. This diminishes the usefulness of a biodrone and turns it into a very expensive drone that needs to eat.

The Pilot Anthroform skill is used when a rigger wants to jump into the stirrup interface of a biodrone and take complete

PILOT ANTHROFORM SPECIALIZATIONS

Type	Example
Canine	Razorhounds, Patroller
Insect	Roach Drones, Fly Relays
Rodent	Rat Eye
Avian	Kamikaze, ReCondor
Swarm	Bio-bombs, the Hive
Mischiefs	Port Authority

Note: Mischiefs and Swarms each require their own specialization and are operated very differently than an individual biodrone of the same critter.

control. Riggers who are unfamiliar with a specific biodrone interface take dice pool penalties to all tests made to control the drone or utilize its sensors. The penalties begin at -4 for foreign interfaces and are reduced based on the amount of time and corollary senses of the rigger. To offset penalties for utilizing a biodrone, there are specializations available for biodrones. Beyond specializations, the penalties can be offset through simsense training. Full training on a new biodrone model takes forty hours of simsense training with a strict regimen for the rigger and biodrone to ensure full interface familiarity. Riggers who complete this training are only at a -2 for piloting the drone.

Sensor Suites

The other issue that riggers face when working with biodrones is managing the sensor suites and information processed through the critter's enhanced senses. A critter's senses can overload the metahuman brain with information it is incapable of processing, so these senses are translated to ease comprehension. For example, a dog's smell exceeds a metahuman's. The scents and pheromones are instead interpreted by a computer to show as colors with variations in hue to demonstrate the nature of the scent and saturation to indicate intensity. This way, a standard sidewalk in the Seattle metropex will be overlaid with vibrant blues, soft greens, and bright yellows to show the standard body odors of people walking along the street. Key fragrances that the critter has been trained to detect can be identified. Through training, a rigger might recognize a blue marker with an intense purple as several doses of novacoke. Similar systems are implemented for nearly all of a biodrone's senses, save astral ones. In cases where a biodrone naturally suffers from diminished senses, cyberware may be implanted to provide accurate sensor feeds for the rigger.

Obviously, learning to identify and understand the information calls for intensive training. Recent discoveries have mapped biodrone enhanced senses to a rigger's enhanced senses. Riggers with natural thermographic vision automatically understand the heat variations shown by the sensor interface. Whenever a rigger has a senseware implant or natural sense to match the critter's enhanced sense, there are no Perception Test modifiers for unfamiliarity. If the rigger has the base sense but not an enhanced version, the rigger suffers a -2 dice pool modifier for all

Perception-related Tests based on that sense. For senses that the rigger has no corollary for, such as the thermosense organs of a pit viper for a normal human, she suffers a -4 dice pool modifier to all Perception-related Tests.

Agents/AIs

As mentioned above, Agents can be used to assist in controlling biodrones suffering from acute cyberpsychoses. Drones with a stirrup interface can be mounted by Agents or AIs and used to pilot as if the biodrone was a standard inorganic model. Sensory information is processed through the computer interface, which can conflict with the natural enhanced senses of the critter. Apply a -2 dice pool modifier to the Agent's Sensor tests when using a biodrone's enhanced senses. Sensory enhancements provided by cyberware do not cause the dice pool modifier.

Combating Biodrones

As with standard drones, hacking provides the ability to override commands and subvert biodrones. Because of this vulnerability, biodrone implants generally have their wireless connections disabled, and implanted commlinks are run in hidden mode with IC and heightened Firewalls. Biodrones can be run as slaved devices to the security networks, but their usefulness is greatly diminished by this.

Jamming can disrupt the cohesion of a Swarm and will reduce the effective Group Rating by the Jammer's rating. While disrupted, the Swarm is disoriented and tries to reassociate.

SAMPLE BIODRONES

This list expands the options presented previously (p. 154, *Augmentation*). Other models are at the gamemaster's discretion.

The Hive (Swarm)

An Aztechnology modification of the bio-bomb, the Hive carries an organic payload rather than an explosive one. The original design parameters for the Hive were to develop a Swarm of bees which could spread fertilizer and more effectively pollinate their vertical farms. Following a raid on an Aztechnology research facility, Alamos 20K stole the plans for the Hive and developed an identical version that released a bio-contagion instead of fertilizer.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
R	1	1	0	1	2	2	1	0	5.75	3	1

Movement: 2/5 (flying)

Skills: Flying 2, Infiltration 3, Perception 4, Tracking 1

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness

Cyberware: Auto-Injector (one-shot), Cybergland, Orientation Goad

Notes: As a Swarm, the Hive's Body attribute is determined by the Group Rating.

Cost: 2,000 nuyen per rating for the Aztechnology version with fertilizer in the Injector; 5,250 nuyen per rating for the Alamos 20K version which releases Bedlam (p. 133, *Augmentation*).

House Cat Mk 2

Following the success of fully robotic pets, researchers began modifying traditional house cats for surveillance and recon. Sold to corporate citizens as a way to monitor their homes while away, they quickly became subverted for use by the corporations themselves to watch their wageslaves.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	3	1	3	3	1	3	0	5.6	6	1

Movement: 10/20

Skills: Athletics 2, Infiltration 3, Perception 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision)

Cyberware: CommLink, Eye Recording Unit, Select Sound Filter 3

Cost: 7,050 nuyen + CommLink price (based on model)

Hunter Seekers (Warform)

Early model biodrones, Hunter Seekers were genetically engineered to be combatants. Crossbreeding dogs with wolves developed a socialized dynamic but also made Hunter Seekers much more feral than expected and harder to train. They are used as security by many Northern NAN groups such as the Algonquin and Manitou. Tribal riggers use the orientation goad to point the pack in the right direction and let instinct take over from there.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
3	5	5	3	3	1	2	3	0	3.9	8	1

Movement: 10/45

Skills: Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 4, Tracking 2

Warform Modifications: Attribute Enhancement (Agi, Bod, Rea, Str)

Cyberware: CAST, Orientation Goad, SEIES, TRACES

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 1P, AP 0), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Scent)

Notes: Treat the Hunter Seekers as feral adults for training purposes.

Optional: Gestalt Consciousness

Cost: 73,700 nuyen

Kamikaze

Developed by CAS Central Intelligence, the Kamikaze is an assassination drone built as a bird, though other models have been used. When it closes within range of its target, the integral cranial bomb detonates. Each is built with a biomonitor to allow for detonation near secondary targets if the biodrone comes under attack.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	5.6	3	1

Movement: 20/40 (flying)

Skills: Flight 2, Perception 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: 1P, AP—)

Cyberware: Biomonitor, Cranial Bomb (Area Bomb), Orientation Goad

Cost: 12,000 nuyen (costs for clones of specific animals may be higher)

Patroller (Warform)

Though not as heavily augmented as the Razorhound, the Patroller is deadlier. Through full integration into the security network, this gen-engineered Hyena was designed to be a smarter and faster combatant. Allowed to roam freely across the perimeter of a facility, the Patroller has full threat assessment capabilities and a few surprises for unwary shadowrunners.



INCOMING FEED.....



ADVANCED CRITTER RULES.....

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
5	5	3	5	3	3	4	3	0	3.8	6	1

Movement: 10/50

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 5

Cyberware: CAST, Commlink (DR: 6), SEIES, TRACES

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP -1), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Smell), Attribute Enhancement (Agi, Bod, Str, Log), Skill Enhancement (Unarmed)

Cost: 85,500 nuyen

Port Authority (Mischief)

Vat-grown and developed, the Port Authority model is built into flocks of seagulls, which circle the docks and behave similarly to their unaugmented counterparts. The Mischief's prime responsibility is surveillance; reporting hostile and suspicious activities.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
R+2	3	2	0	1	3	1	1	1	5.2	4	1

Movement: 20/60 (flying)

Skills: Flight 2, Perception 2

Cyberware: CAST, Commlink, Orientation Goad

Cost: Group Rating x (79,500 + commlink cost) nuyen

Rat Eye

A common rat with additional sensory equipment, the Rat Eye takes advantage of the ubiquitous presence of rats in urban habitats. The basic version is self-sustaining and forages for food without attention from the security rigger. Other models, including rabbits and squirrels, are available based on environmental conditions. Rat Eyes are often used by shadowrunners to investigate the air ducts of a building and pull fiberoptic cabling.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	3	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	4.95	3	1

Movement: 5/15

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Cyberware: Cybereyes Rating 1 (with Vision Magnification), Orientation Goad, TRACES (add CAST implant for enhanced version)

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell)

Note: -1 Reach

Cost: 27,000 nuyen for basic version, 52,000 nuyen for CAST version

Razorhound

Developed by Parashield, the Razorhound is a fully functional attack drone designed for area denial and interdiction. Generally released into unpopulated areas, the Razorhound is highly aggressive and nearly impossible to train. When the drone needs to operate in a populated area or near other security personnel, Agents and riggers are used to control the drone's operations.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	3	3	(7)	2	3	3	1	3	0.92	6	(10) 1(3)

Movement: 10/45

Skills: Dodge 2, Intimidation 2, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Cyberware: (all Alpha-grade) CAST, Flare Compensation, Hand-Razors, SEIES, Stirrup Interface 2, Submachine Gun, Taser

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: 2P, AP 0), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision)

Autosofts: Automatics 4, Pistols 4

Weapons: Handrazors (3P, AP -1), Submachine Gun (DV 5P, AP -, SA/BF, RC 2, 24 (c)), Taser (DV 6S(e), AP -half, SA, 4(m))

Cost: 275,000 nuyen

Roach Drone

Designed for reconnaissance and infiltration, the Roach drone is fully vat-grown and capable of entering a location through very small holes. With the Roach's sight, hearing, and smell transmitted back to the rigger, it is easy to get a full understanding of the activity in a building before breaching. Security specialists release them in large warehouses where insects are expected and ignored to provide additional surveillance.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	1	3	0	1	2	0	1	0	5.4	5	1

Movement: 2/5

Skills: Dodge 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 2

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Wall Walking

Cyberware: Orientation Goad, Eye Recording Unit, Cyber Ears Rating 1, Olfactory Booster 4

Notes: -1 Reach

Cost: 7,000 nuyen each or 35,000 nuyen per Group Rating as Swarm

ReCondor

A high-flying reconnaissance drone, the ReCondor is traditionally built into a locally available non-migratory bird type. Popular models include seagulls, falcons, and owls. The bird follows normal nesting behaviors, though it never mates due to inherent sterility.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	4	3	1	2	4	2	2	0	4.25	7	1

Movement: 20/60 (flying)

Skills: Flight 3, Perception 3, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Cyberware: CAST, Commlink, Orientation Goad, Thermographic Vision, TRACES, Vision Enhancement 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: 2P, AP 0), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision)

Cost: 60,500 nuyen plus Commlink

Sensor Swarm VI (Swarm)

Using the olfactory booster as a chemsniffer to identify specific compounds, the insect Sensor Swarm is designed for scouting a building or large shipment for explosives, chemical warfare, and biological agents. The Swarm is available only to accredited security agencies, though a civilian model is being developed.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
R	1	1	0	1	2	2	1	0	5.5	3	1

Movement: 10/20 (flying)

Skills: Flying 2, Infiltration 3, Perception 4, Tracking 1

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Natural Weapon (Sting: DV 2P, AP -2), Wall Walking

Cyberware: Olfactory Booster 4, Commlink (DR 3), Orientation Goad

Notes: As a Swarm, the Sensor Swarm VI's Body attribute is determined by the Group Rating. The Signal rating for the Swarm is equal to (Group Rating + 4).

Cost: Rating x 7,500 nuyen

Smart-Connect (Swarm)

Recently discovered in Atlanta, the Smart-Connect is a Swarm of flies designed to bridge communications gaps between secure systems. The integral commlink is modified to accept only subscriptions from a specific list of devices and then retransmit the information across the Swarm. CDC officials discovered them near a research facility but were unable to trace the manufacturer.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
R	1	3	0	1	1	0	1	0	5.7	4	1

Movement: 10/20 (flying)

Skills: Dodge 1, Flight 1, Infiltration 3, Perception 2

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness

Cyberware: Commlink (DR 6), Orientation Goad

Notes: As a Swarm, the Smart-Connect's Body attribute is determined by the Group Rating. The Signal rating for the Swarm is equal to (Group Rating + 6). Since the Smart-Connect is a retrans unit (p. 142, *Arsenal*), if two devices are in its range, they are treated as being in range of each other.

Cost: Rating x 12,500 nuyen

Stalker (Chimeric)

Developed by the Sioux to be used alongside the Wildcats, the Stalker is a Chimeric mountain lion. Trained from a young age using simsense and shamanic abilities, the mountain lions are used as soldiers. Each Stalker is equipped for mission parameters with gear harnesses and combat drugs.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
9(11)	8	4(6)	8	3	3	2	3	4	2.9	7(9)	1

Movement: 10/60

Armor: 6/6

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 2, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Attribute Enhancement (Agi, Bod, Str), Chimeric Ability (Armor), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 8P, AP 0), Pheromone Coding, Thicker Hide

Bioware: Bone Density 2, Damage Compensators 3

Cyberware: Auto-Injector (Reusable, K-10), Blood Circuit Control, CAST, Reaction Enhancers 2

Cost: 185,000 nuyen

INTEGRATING CRITTERS INTO YOUR GAME

Critters can enhance a game for both players and gamemasters. They can provide challenging obstacles for runners when used as security devices. They can be equally useful for runners, complementing their abilities or providing some very loyal extra muscle. Additionally, some players may choose a pet to add depth and dimension to their characters. Rules for buying animals, training and handling animals, incorporating animals into lifestyles, and using them in a security setting are detailed below.

PROCURING CRITTERS

Getting a critter can be very easy or very difficult, depending on the critter, the location, and the player characters' access to either SINS or a black market contact.

The majority of traditional pets are legal and readily available at the local mall or specialty pet shop. Critters from mass-market pet shops are never considered "trained." The critters will always be sterile (even the fish). Frequently, they are lab-created, cloned en



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ADVANCED CRITTER RULES.....

masse from the most popular and bestselling strains. (Paranormals cannot be cloned, so mass-market pet shops generally do not carry them.) A valid SIN is required to purchase any critter (cat-sized or larger) from a legal pet shop. Most pet shops can assist a new owner with procuring the appropriate licenses for a pet with a small fee at the time of purchase. Augmented and gene-tweaked critters are not available at most pet shops.

Online retailers sell a much broader selection of critters, including gene-tweaked or customized critters and Paranormals. Legitimate retailers will not ship critters to an address where they are restricted or outlawed. Purchasing a critter from an online retailer requires a valid SIN and proof of appropriate licenses prior to delivery. Due to the high cost of shipping live critters, the price of critters purchased online is increased by 25 percent. If the critter must be imported from another country, the total price increase including shipping is 50 percent. Animals that are “exotic,” or not native to the region where they are being purchased, may have an additional markup at gamemaster’s discretion (10–25 percent is recommended). Online retailers can offer critters with basic training, although with decreased availability and significant time and cost increases. Legitimate online retailers will sell only sterile critters.

Specialized breeders and trainers (corporate or independent) sell rarer critters. These may be sold highly trained. They may also sell purebreds and fertile critters. Purchasing a fertile critter, when possible, increases the base price by 50 percent or more, depending upon the critter.

Licenses cost 10 percent of the base (untrained) cost for legal critters and 20 percent for restricted critters. Licenses must

be renewed annually. Forbidden critters cannot be licensed for private ownership. Critters that are cat-sized and larger require licenses, as will all Paranormals. Fake licenses can be procured (Fake License, p. 332, *SR4A*).

The basic prices for sample animals are included below. For animals not listed, it is recommended that the gamemaster find a similar animal and use that as a baseline to establish a price. Of course, different nations will have varying costs associated with different animals as well as variations in what animals are legal, restricted, or forbidden. All the animals listed are regular, sterilized specimens; entries for purebred or rare animals list the suggested beginning price, and costs can go much higher. Note that technocritters are still rare enough that they are not available on the open market, and they require specialized black market contacts to acquire. Accordingly, prices for these critters are not listed below, and acquiring one (to keep or sell) may require one or more runs.

Some animals require a minimum lifestyle. If using the Advanced Lifestyle rules (p. 149, *Runner’s Companion*), the minimum lifestyle refers to Necessities. For more on lifestyle adjustments, see p. 39. There is also an additional monthly cost associated with each animal, which covers food and basic supplies.

NEW SKILLS

A variety of skills come into play when training and using animals in game play. While purchasing a trained animal is possible, some characters may wish to save money by training an animal themselves. This also allows runners to customize their animal’s training. Pre-trained animals are unlikely to come with the variety of tricks that are useful to a runner (such as training a

Bandit to pick locks on command). Animal Training is the skill a character would use to train their own animal or to train animals for sale. Other skills related to critters include Animal Handling, VetTech, and Riding. These four skills are grouped in the Animal Husbandry skill group. Animal-specific knowledge skills can be created for any discipline of study or background.

The Animal Empathy positive quality (p. 90, *SR4A*), the Critter Spook negative quality (p. 117, *Runner's Companion*), and the Animal Empathy Adept power (p. 175, *Street Magic*) affect the training and handling of critters, and bonuses from these qualities/powers apply to all four skills in the Animal Husbandry skill group.

Animal Handling (Intuition)

The Animal Handling skill represents the understanding of animal behavior and the practical application of that knowledge to safely and humanely interact with animals. It includes the ability to read animal body language and cues, knowledge of typical and atypical behavior, and appropriate responses to animals that are

fearful, hostile, injured, or panicked. Use this skill to befriend a hostile guard animal, soothe a frightened wild animal, or pacify an agitated paracritter.

Default: Yes

Skill Group: Animal Husbandry

Specialization: By animal type or situation (Veterinary, Security, Wildlife)

Animal Training (Intuition)

The Animal Training skill represents a character's ability to teach an animal to respond to specific stimuli or conditions. This skill includes identifying the appropriate motivators for training and how to best apply training techniques and methods to achieve the desired end result.

Default: Yes

Skill Group: Animal Husbandry

Specialization: By animal type (Canine, Avian, Equine, Paranormal, Emerged, etc.)

ANIMAL AVAILABILITY AND COST CHART

Animal	Availability (Untrained)	Cost	Lifestyle (Necessities) Minimum/Monthly Cost
Pet/Livestock			
Goldfish	–	2Y	Squatter/5Y
Small Bird*	–	25Y	Squatter/5Y
Bonzo	6	1,000Y	Low/25Y
Hawk (Redtail)*	6	500Y	Middle/100Y
Falcon (Peregrine)*	12	5,000Y	Middle/150Y
Small Rodent	–	25Y	Squatter/5Y
Ferret	–	250Y	Middle/25Y
Cat*	–	50Y	Squatter/25Y
Dog (cloned)*	–	100Y+	Middle/100Y
Sheep	4	500Y	High/150Y
Pig	4	250Y	High/150Y
Cow	4	2,000Y	Luxury/250Y
Horse*	4*	2,000Y	Luxury/250Y
Snake (non-venomous)	–	100Y	Low/25Y
Tarantula	–	100Y	Squatter/25Y
Paranormals/Exotics			
Aardwolf	6R	5,000Y	Middle/100Y
Artnwerre	6R	800Y	Middle/100Y
Baboon	8R	25,000Y	Luxury/400Y
Bandit	8R	2,000Y	Low/100Y
Barghest	15R	11,000Y	High/500Y
Bear, Grizzly	16F	6,500Y	Luxury/500Y
Basilisk	14R	40,000Y	Middle/200Y
Blackberry Cat	6F	1,000Y	Street/25Y
Cerberus Hound	20F	80,000Y	Luxury/500Y
Chimera	12F	37,000Y	High/200Y

Animal	Availability (Untrained)	Cost	Lifestyle (Necessities) Minimum/Monthly Cost
Cougar/Great Cat	12R	5,000Y	High/500Y
Dog Asp	10F	3,500Y	Middle/100Y
Dolphin	12R	10,000Y	n/a**
Elephant	12F	55,000Y	Luxury/500Y
Fenrir Wolf	10F	14,000Y	Middle/250Y
Gabriel Hound	8R	2,000Y	Middle/250Y
Gomatia	8	5,000Y	Middle/100Y
Hell Hound	15R	10,000Y	High/500Y
Icedrakon	25F	2,000,000Y	n/a**
Juggernaut	18F	1,500,000Y	n/a**
Merlin Hawk	10	8,000Y	Middle/100Y
Nimue's Salamander	15R	40,000Y	Middle/100Y
Ostrich	6	2,500Y	High/200Y
Pegasus	12F	5,000Y	Luxury/500Y
Penguin	12	2,000Y	High/250Y
Piranha	8R	250Y	Middle/100Y
Piasma	18F	80,000Y	Luxury/500Y
Saber-Tooth Cat	18R	25,000Y	Luxury/500Y
Sea Lion	12R	6,000Y	Luxury/500Y
Shark (Great White)	18F	100,000Y	n/a**
Shark (Mako)	12R	9,000Y	n/a**
Unicorn	12R	8,000Y	Luxury/250Y
Wolf	12R	1,000Y	Middle/250Y

* Purebred, non-cloned, luxury, or exotic varieties are available. Costs for these are much higher than the standard or cloned variety.

** These critters require special accommodations or cannot be kept in captivity, so they require a large land preserve, a large aquatic environment, a zoo, or similar habitat.

Riding (Reaction)

The Riding skill is used to effectively ride a mount. A character would use the Riding skill to anticipate a mount's actions and to control a mount even in stressful situations. This skill is used for all land- and air-based riding situations with mounts ranging from horses to dragons.

Default: Yes

Skill Group: Animal Husbandry

Specialization: By animal (Horse, Camel, Dragons, etc.) or riding style (Western, Huntseat, Racing, etc.)

VetTech (Logic)

The VetTech skill is used to provide medical care for critters. This includes first aid and surgery as well as preventative care such as immunizations. The skill also includes knowledge of specific drugs and therapies for use with non-metahuman patients. This skill can be used to provide first aid and medical care for non-metahuman sapient critters such as centaurs, naga, and shapeshifters. As with Awakened metahumans, treating Awakened or Emergent creatures has a -2 dice pool modifier when using modern medical knowledge, which can be negated by specializing in treating Awakened animals. This skill also covers handling injured and sick creatures safely and with empathy towards the critter.

Default: No

Skill Group: Animal Husbandry

Specialization: By animal type (Paranormal, Awakened, Emergent, Mammal, Aquatic, etc.)

TRAINING AND HANDLING CRITTERS

Training your own animal is a challenging and time-consuming task, but one with many rewards. For characters who wish to train an animal, the following rules detail the process. Swarms and Mischiefs can also be trained, although it is a much more difficult process that is generally performed by specialists. Note that sapient critters cannot be trained by the following rules; they learn new skills using the Improving Skills and Skill Groups rules (p. 270, SR4A). Training is the only way for non-sapient critters to increase their natural skills or learn new skills (however, the skills they can learn are subject to gamemaster discretion).

In addition, trained animals need periodic reinforcement of training. Rules for keeping their training up are included below.

Animal Training

Animal Training is an Extended Test that is opposed by the animal. The time interval for training is based on the complexity of the learned behavior. Training which reinforces instinctive behavior takes less time than training which forces the animal to go against instinct.

To train a critter, the player first picks the training desired and then determines the interval based on the complexity of the training. The threshold for the test is based on the complexity of the training. The player then rolls Animal Training + Intuition versus the critter's Willpower. The character's net hits are applied to the threshold. When the threshold has been met, the critter has been successfully trained in the desired behavior.

Wild critters are inherently more resistant to training. A wild-born critter rolls Willpower x 2 to resist training, while an adult wild-caught (or feral) critter uses Willpower x 3 to resist

TRAINED ANIMALS

Purchasing pre-trained critters is possible via legal or black market channels. The chart below is a guideline for the cost multiplier of a trained critter. Not all critters are available trained. Gamemasters have the final say on if a character can find a trained specimen. To calculate the trained price, multiply the base cost of the critter by the training level multiplier and then by the Willpower multiplier. Note that combat training automatically changes normal critters to Availability R and Paranormal critters to Availability F.

TRAINING MULTIPLIER TABLE

Training Level	Multiplier	Willpower	
		Rating	Multiplier
Instinctive	1.25	1-2	1
Basic	2	3-4	2
Moderate	5	5-6	5
Advanced	7	7	10
Against Instincts	10	8+	15

A Seeing Eye Dog (cloned) has a base cost of 100 nuyen, multiplied by 7 (Advanced Training) for 700 nuyen, then multiplied by 2 (Willpower 3) for a total price of 1,400 nuyen.

A trained Security Hellhound has a base cost of 10,000 nuyen, multiplied by 10 (Combat Training/Against Instincts), and then multiplied by 2 (Willpower 3) for a total price of 200,000 nuyen.

training efforts. If a critter achieves more hits than the trainer, it remain "untamed." Gamemasters may optionally choose to substitute Resonance or Magic for Willpower in these tests as applicable.

Training critters can be hazardous, especially if the critter is wild or dangerous. If a wild or dangerous critter gets greater than 4 net hits more than the trainer when resisting training, the critter will attack the trainer.

During the training period, daily training is required. The amount of time spent daily is based on the complexity of the task. Training time does not need to be done in one sitting, and generally the critter will learn faster if the daily training is broken up into multiple sessions over the course of the day. A day is considered a 24-hour period. Training needs to be continuous. If the character takes a break from training, the training must be restarted. For Advanced and Against Instincts training, a character may take periodic breaks (no more than 1 week of time per interval) without restarting the training.

Because critters learn at their own pace and training strongly relies on consistent reinforcement, increasing the daily training time has no effect on the overall training time. It is not possible to Rush the Job (p. 65, SR4A) when training critters.

A glitch during the training period results in increasing the training period by one interval. A critical glitch results in a critter with a permanent bad habit, such as a guard dog becoming extremely gun-shy.

Increasing a natural skill (one listed in the critter's stat block) by +1 is considered Moderate complexity. A critter can be trained to increase a natural skill multiple times, but each time requires a new training task. A critter may be trained to increase a natural skill up to 1.5 times its original rating (to a maximum of 6). A critter may be trained in a new skill, but the complexity is up to the gamemaster, and the skill should be appropriate to the critter (e.g., training a Newfoundland dog for a Swimming skill at rating 1 would be Basic complexity; training a cat for a Swimming 1 skill would be Against Instincts).

An Emergent cat has moved in with Netcat. She wants to train her new houseguest—starting with using the litter box. The gamemaster rules that this will be an Instinctive behavior that has an interval of 1 day and a threshold of 6. Netcat has an Animal Training skill of 1 and an Intuition of 5. Netcat rolls her Intuition 5 + Animal Training 1 and gets 2 hits. The cat rolls his Willpower 3 and gets 1 hit, giving Netcat a total of 1 net hit towards her threshold of 6. The next day, Netcat repeats the test and gets 3 net hits. On the third day, Netcat gets 2 more net hits and reaches the threshold of 6. It takes her three days to teach her new friend to use the litter box ... smart kitty!

KEEPING UP THE TRAINING

It is necessary to periodically refresh the animal's training. Reinforcing desired behaviors and discouraging undesirable behaviors depends on the complexity of the behavior. The Training Reinforcement Table shows the frequency needed to keep an animal performing at its best.

The Training Reinforcement Test is an Opposed Test between the trainer's Animal Training + Intuition and the animal's Willpower. Because wild animals are never truly tamed, wild-born animals roll Willpower x 2 and adult-captured wild animals roll Willpower x 3 for the test.

TRAINING TIME TABLE

Complexity	Interval	Daily Training Time	Threshold
Instinctive	1 day	10 minutes	6
Basic	1 week	30 minutes	6
Moderate	1 week	1 hour	12
Advanced	1 month	2 hours	18
Against Instincts	1 month	3 hours	24

REALISTIC TRAINING TIMES

While the training times presented are shortened to enhance gameplay, groups that desire more realistic training times may opt to use these alternative intervals:

Instinctive: 1 day
Basic: 1 week
Moderate: 2 weeks
Advanced: 2 months
Against Instincts: 3 months

The reinforcement training time is equal to the critter's total hits x 1 hour. If the critter gets at least 1 net hit in the opposed test or if the trainer glitches, some aspect of the animal's training needs more in-depth reinforcement. The trainer will need to work with the critter on a daily basis (using the time guidelines from the Training Interval Table) for a number of days equal to the critter's hits before the critter can once again be considered well-trained. A critical glitch causes the animal to permanently learn an undesirable behavior. If a wild or dangerous critter gets more than 4 net hits in the opposed test, it may attack its handler or be considered dangerous until it is well-trained again (e.g., a horse may start bucking when ridden).

TRAINING THE AWAKENED/EMERGED

Training Awakened and Emerged critters is more complicated than training animals with only normal senses.

Awakened Critters

Dual-natured critters and critters with the ability to perceive Astral space can be trained to use their Astral skills on command. Since training hinges on rewarding the critter promptly when presented with the target stimulus and desired behavior, trainers who are unable to astrally perceive are also unable to successfully train the critter to use its abilities. If the trainer has the ability to astrally perceive, the training follows the normal rules and intervals.

Teaching an animal to use an innate spell on command does not require an Awakened trainer. It may, however, require a trainer who doesn't mind getting targeted by the innate spell during training. Because many Awakened powers are inherently dangerous for trainers, successful Paranormal animal trainers are a valuable commodity to both corporations and private security managers.

TRAINING REINFORCEMENT TABLE

Complexity	Refreshment Period
Instinctive	Negligible
Basic	Negligible
Moderate	Quarterly
Advanced	Monthly
Against Instincts	Weekly

Training an Emergent critter to use innate abilities on command requires a trainer with access to the Matrix, either via AR or VR. To teach the critter to respond to or interact with Resonance-based stimuli, however, the trainer must have the ability to access the Resonance. In some instances, critters may be trained to react to Resonance-based entities by presenting them with such stimuli and rewarding them, although it will take longer if done by a non-Emerged trainer. In game terms, this is reflected by doubling the training interval and shifting the Complexity of the training task to a minimum of Advanced. An Emergent critter cannot be trained to use Resonance abilities actively (i.e. engaging in Matrix combat, hacking a node, etc.) except by an Emerged trainer.

Max is an animal trainer for Renraku. Renraku acquires a Mongrel (an Emerged beagle) and gives it to Max to train, telling him they want it to identify hidden technomancers.

Max is not a technomancer himself, so he needs to find another way to train the dog. Renraku provides him with access to several research labs and test subjects. He notices that the beagle seems naturally drawn to the technomancers in the labs when they are forced to access the Resonance. After that, Max focuses on training the beagle to use its natural abilities to identify people accessing the Resonance. He decides he wants the beagle to go to any technomancer it senses and drop a small red ball at their feet. Unfortunately, because he cannot control the stimuli, the training takes much longer.

Because Max is unable to access the Resonance himself, the training will be Advanced, increasing the threshold to 18, and the normal 1 month interval will be doubled. He will have to train the dog for two hours each day, seven days a week, to see any results.

Max rolls his Animal Training 4 + Intuition 4 against the beagle's Willpower of 3. He gets 2 net hits. Two months later, he rolls again, getting another 2 net hits. Two months after that, he gets 3 more hits. Eventually, nine tests later (18 months), he finally achieves the threshold of 18 and has trained the beagle to approach technomancers actively accessing the Resonance and drop a small red ball at their feet.

If Max had been a technomancer himself, the Complexity would have been Basic with an interval of 1 week and a threshold of 6. It would have taken Max only three weeks to successfully train the beagle.

SWARMS/MISCHIEFS

Training groups of animals is more challenging. When training a group of animals, use one base critter's stats to establish the base training interval and threshold. Then multiply the training interval by the group size (Swarm/Mischief Group Rating x Interval). Additionally, the training threshold is increased by the Group Rating. When rolling the Extended Test, the animals add their Swarm rating to their Willpower attribute to resist training.

Two groups that have equal training can be combined to make one larger group.

ATTUNEMENT (ANIMAL) ADEPT METAMAGIC

The Attunement (Animal) metamagic technique gives an adept a low-level telepathic link to an attuned Mundane critter, so that the adept can issue simple telepathic commands to the critter. Those commands may or may not be obeyed (especially if the command puts the critter in danger or goes against its instincts). Training the critter allows an adept to give much more complicated commands to the critter and encounter far less resistance to the commands.

When an adept has Attuned to a critter, the empathic link between the two of them provides the adept with a clear advantage in training. The adept may add her Initiate grade as a positive dice pool modifier for all tests involving Training or Handling the Attuned critter. The adept's Initiate grade also affects the Training Test thresholds, decreasing the threshold by (Initiate Grade ÷ 2, round up). In addition, training intervals are halved, and the adept does not need to make any Training Reinforcement tests.

Note that insects (individually or in Swarms) cannot be trained beyond Instinctive behaviors.

Max wants to train a Mischief of crows to watch over his home and press panic buttons to alert him if any metahumans enter his property. This will be a Basic task.

Crows have Willpower 3. Because Max hatched the crows and hand-raised them, they are considered domesticated (were he to attempt to do this with a wild flock of crows, the task would be much more challenging). The Mischief consists of six crows for a Group 2 Mischief.

Max's threshold for training the crows is 6 (Basic Task) + 2 (Mischief rating), or 8. The base interval is 1 week, multiplied by the Mischief's rating of 2 for an interval of 2 weeks. Max rolls his Animal Training 4 + Intuition 4 for a total of 8, against the crows' Willpower 3 + Mischief rating 2, or 5.

ADVANCED PACK TRAINING

Larger critters can be trained to function as a group, giving them a distinct strategic advantage over single critters. This is generally effective only for critters that naturally form Packs. For critters that naturally function as a group, such as a Pack of wolves, there are two levels of Pack Training: Basic and Advanced. Critters that are naturally solitary or hostile to other members of their species can only have Basic Pack Training.

A Pack has at least three members.

Basic Pack Training allows the critters to effectively operate as a group. Basic Pack Training is considered Basic for natural pack animals (wolves, horses), Moderate for critters that are neutral towards others of their species (raccoons), and Against Instincts for critters that are naturally solitary or hostile to other members of their species (jaguars). For each critter in the group, add +1 to the

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threshold. The training intervals remain the same, but the daily training time is increased by one-quarter per critter.

Advanced Pack Training gives the critters a further advantage. This training mimics a tacnet (p. 126, *Unwired*) for the critters with bonuses applying to tests (i.e. Shadowing, Maneuvering, Close Combat, Surprise, etc.) for which the critters have been trained. For every trained critter working on the same task, apply a +1 dice pool modifier for tactical tests or initiative tests, up to a maximum of +8. Modifiers stack with those from the Gestalt Consciousness power, Teamwork Tests, and Friends in Melee bonuses.

By focusing the training on the Alpha of the Pack, Advanced Pack Training is significantly easier than training each critter individually. The trainer first picks the desired behavior, setting the base training threshold and interval for the Alpha. Each additional critter trained in the behavior via Advanced Pack Training increases the daily time necessary for training by one-quarter (round up) per critter. The intervals are also increased by one-quarter (round up) per critter. For every additional two critters, add +1 (round down) to the Alpha's Willpower when rolling the Training Test. When the threshold has been met, all critters in the pack are considered trained in that behavior and receive the Advanced Pack Training bonus for tests falling under that training.

Trager is training a group of four guard dogs to protect a facility against intruders. He wants them to attack any intruders without any handlers nearby. The gamemaster rules this will be an Advanced Complexity with a threshold of 18.

Trager spends 2 hours a day working with the Alpha dog. He spends another 1.5 hours working with all the dogs together. The interval would normally be 1 month, but because of the additional three dogs, it is 1 month, 3 weeks. At each interval, Trager rolls his Animal Training 3 (Canines +2) + Intuition 4 versus the Alpha's Willpower 3 + 1 for the additional three dogs.

Later, Trager's pack of dogs are trained and roaming the compound when they detect a group of trespassers. When they attack the trespassers, each dog rolls an individual attack test (Unarmed Combat 3 + Agility 3). However, they each receive a +4 dice pool bonus for Advanced Pack Training, giving each dog a total dice pool of 10 for their attacks. If two of the dogs attack one target, they can also use Friends in Melee or a Teamwork Test to further increase their dice pools.

SAMPLES OF TRAINING LEVELS

Dog

Instinctive: Sit, Lay Down, Crate Training, Bark on Command

Basic: Shake, Recall, Heel, Stay

Moderate: Attack or Defend on Command, Jump Through Hoop, Follow Obstacle Course (off-leash, verbal/visual commands), Dodge

Advanced: Drug-Sniffing, Search and Rescue, Tracking, Directed Bite Placement (e.g. bite gun-arm), Guide Dogs for Disabled, Attacking to Disable, Attack (general or non-identified metahumans) Without Handler Present

Against Instincts: Combat Training (with loud gunfire), Not Chasing a Running Target, Not Attacking a Threat

Bandit

Instinctive: Come when Called, Open Lock on Command, Investigate Area on Command

Basic: Housetraining, Bite/Don't Bite on Command, Simple One-word commands (Up, Swim, Climb, Retrieve, No!)

Moderate: Retrieve (Multi-step: Find Box, Unlock Box, Take Item, Return Item), Make Noise, Throw Item, Identify Item by Word (i.e. "Gun" or "Link")

Advanced: Follow Obstacle Course with Verbal/Visual Command, Stealth, Multi-Step Commands ("Retrieve Gun and Find Clip," "Push Button and Enter Door," or "Open Fridge, Retrieve Beer")

Against Instincts: Attack, Perform Any Command While in Danger/Under Attack/Injured

Techno-Ferret

Instinctive: Pick Up Object, Investigate Area/Node on Command,* Bite on Command

Basic: Housetraining, Don't Bite on Command, Hack Node,† Retrieve (physical/AR*) Object, Use Stealth on Command†

Moderate: Basic Active Skills (Locksmith, Unarmed Combat, Dodge, Infiltration),† Track Resonance Entities,† Identify Resonance Entities, Carry or Place Datapacket,* Follow Verbal, Visual, or Resonance* Commands to Navigate Maze/Path, Simple Multi-Step Commands ("Press Button")

Advanced: Use Matrix Perception (for specific object, such as databomb),* Use Matrix Perception (for specific Resonance item/entity, such as Watermark),† Navigate via AROs, Multi-Step Commands ("Follow AROs, Open Screen, Press Button")

Against Instincts: Attack Resonance-Based Critters†

*Only AR-enabled trainers can train this task

†Only technomancers can train this task

Vervet Monkey

Instinctive: Alert to Danger (vocally), Alert to Astral/Mana Effects (vocally),* Come when Called, Trigger Alarm

Basic: Open/Close Door on Command, Retrieve, Throw, Identify Simple One-Word Objects (Gun, Link, Apple, Button, Switch)

Moderate: Housetraining, Alert to Danger/Astral Presence* via Non-Vocal Signal, Multi-Step Commands ("Retrieve Gun" or "Trip Switch")

Advanced: Be Quiet, Pinpoint Astral Presence*

Against Instincts: Multi-Step Reaction to Danger (Sense Astral Presence,* Be Silent, Go to Box, Press Button), Attack on Command

*Only Astrally Perceiving trainers can train this task

Kitteh*

Instinctive: Seek Programs, Stay in a Node, Do Something Cute

Basic: Search a Node, Come to Another Node (when called), Munge on Command

Moderate: Attack or Disarm on Command, Heel

Advanced: Perform Specific Matrix Actions, Avoid Munging Specific Programs

Against Instincts: Use Non-Inherent Programs, Not Munging when Hungry, Interact with Physical World

* Only AR/VR trainers can train a Kitteh

Daemon*

Instinctive: Seek AIs in Node, Attack AI

Basic: Stay in a Node

Moderate: Fight Non-AI, Attack Non-AI, Heel

Advanced: Stay in a Fight when Hurt, Refrain from Hunting when Hungry

Against Instincts: Use Non-Inherent Programs, Refrain from Attacking AI

* Only AR/VR trainers can train a Daemon

INCORPORATING CRITTERS INTO LIFESTYLES

Keeping a critter requires some adjustments in a character's lifestyle. Many critters require specialized diets, and some require foods that are not readily available. They also require some amount of space, from a small goldfish bowl to several acres of grazing land. Some critters will require a warm living area, like reptiles from tropical locales, which means the character must have a way to maintain power to a home at all times. Finally, many landlords will be extremely reluctant to rent a home to a tenant with a restricted pet, a Paranormal critter, or an augmented critter. Those that do may charge a premium.

Feeding critters can also be challenging. Some critters must have specific ingredients in their diets, like fresh fruits, insects, or real meat. On the Animal Availability and Cost Chart, the additional premium per month includes the cost for providing these special food items. If using the Advanced Lifestyle rules (p. 149, *Runner's Companion*), the Homegrown Farming Lifestyle Quality may substitute for this monthly cost, with animals requiring fresh fruits and vegetables. Critters that require a meat-based diet may also be provided for by hunting on a daily basis. (Note that many sprawl critters such as devil rats carry toxins and diseases from exposure to pollutants and are not suitable for many critters as a food source.)

If using the basic lifestyle rules presented on p. 267, *SR4A*, use the minimum from the Animal Availability and Cost Chart, p. 34, to establish the minimum lifestyle necessary to support the animal. To represent the additional surcharge a landlord may require for a "pet-friendly" rental, add 10 percent to the base lifestyle cost. In addition to the base lifestyle monthly cost, there is a separate surcharge listed that incorporates the critter's monthly needs for food, supplies, and routine veterinary care.

If using Advanced Lifestyle rules, the minimum lifestyle listed in the Animal Availability and Cost Chart applies to the Necessities category. In addition, there are several lifestyle qualities that allow a character to have a pet in their home. These may be mandatory or optional for those using the Advanced Lifestyle rules at gamemaster discretion. Keep in mind, however, that most landlords in the Sixth World are hesitant about or outright against having augmented, exotic,



or Paranormal animals as tenants. Lifestyle qualities that are particularly well suited towards having animals include Easy-Going Landlord, Homegrown Farming, No Neighbors, and Workplace. Workplace specifically increases the space aspects of Necessities by two levels, and it could be used to have a large fenced yard, a mini-acre, an aviary, or small barn on the property. Note that the Astral Repellant quality is incompatible with Paranormal animals.

Animal Lover One +1

This Lifestyle quality allows a tenant to have a legal, licensed pet up to 10 kilograms. This is restricted to common pets available at general pet stores, such as birds, rodents, caged reptiles, cats, and small dogs. Common popular Paranormal pets such as the alufye or bonzo are included. This quality allows any small animal with legal availability.

Animal Lover Two +3

Your landlord or neighborhood allows larger pets up to 55 kilograms or multiple smaller pets. Harmless legal Paranormal pets are allowed, including gomatia or bandits. If the home is in a rural area, this quality would allow one large livestock animal. This quality allows any legal animal or any animal up to an 8R.

Animal Lover Three +5

Your landlord doesn't mind whatever pets you have as long as they don't burn down the property. Exotic and wild animals are included, such as a vervet monkey, a domesticated wolf, or a hunting falcon. This quality cannot be taken with any of the Neighbors qualities (except No Neighbors). This quality allows any animal, including those with an availability of F. This quality can only be taken in a Street, Squatter, or Luxury Neighborhood or in combination with Rural Home.

Rural Home +2

You live outside the city in a rural neighborhood where lot sizes are at least ten acres or larger. You may have a well and a large garden area for fresh, organic foods. Your neighbors keep to themselves, and privacy is ensured by fences, wooded areas, and hedges. On the downside, roads are poorly maintained, police and emergency services have a response time of twenty minutes or longer, and utilities can suffer outages in bad weather. This quality is incompatible with the Neighbors qualities (except No Neighbors). If taken, this allows a character to have an animal with a Necessities category two levels lower than required on the Animal Costs and Availability Table (to a minimum of Squatter).

Outbuildings +1/+2

Your home has one or more outbuildings. At the first level, this may be a small aviary, dog kennel, or small animal house. At the second level, it may be a multi-stall barn, large kennel, or even indoor riding arena.

Reinforced Housing +1/+3

Your home and furnishings have been designed to withstand the destructive forces of animals and small children. From sealed tile floors to heavy fireproofing on the walls and ceilings, your home can survive the worst a pet can dish out. Your home may also have enhanced soundproofing, so your neighbors aren't bothered by the various vocal performances of your pets. If taken in combination with Outbuildings, the outbuildings share the same reinforced construction. At 1 LP, this quality is suitable for normal animals and less dangerous Paranormals. At 3 LP, this quality is suitable for more dangerous Paranormals, augmented critters, or technocritters, and it includes measures designed for a particular animal (soundproofing for barghests, fireproofing for hell hounds, appliances with increased firewalls for technocritters, etc.).



Rocks and dirt shifted under her four hooves and rained down the mountainside below her. The smell of fresh-turned earth, wet stone, and torn foliage was overlaid by the spicy sweet fragrance of fallen evergreens. Threaded through the after-storm smell of the mountain was the musky scent of wolf. Kawai-i looked up the steep slope.

The grey wolf was at the top. His amber eyes glowed. His teeth were bared.

"Are you laughing at me, asshole?" she shouted.

Below her feet, she felt the earth shift again. Gritting her teeth, she resumed the climb, carefully feeling for the most secure route. Any steeper, and this would be called mountain climbing. Treacherous for her, yes, but impossible for metahuman vehicles, which is why they'd sent her to search this area for the downed plane. Above her, the wolf waited and watched. Her muscles strained and bunched, and she pushed off, leaping the final few meters. She landed, scrambled for a secure foothold, and almost fell ... but didn't.

The wolf came up to her waist, teeth scant inches from her belly. The hot scent of her sweat flowed over the smell of forest loam. The wolf growled low and deep enough that she felt the damp earth vibrate as he crouched, muscles bunching.

Their eyes met. He sprang, sailed over her shoulder, and disappeared like mist into the dense forest.

"Showoff!" she shouted.

Ahead of her, she heard howling.

Ignoring the cuts and scrapes, she galloped through the dense forest. The howls faded, but she knew where the wolf was.

She knew she'd found him before she saw him. The stench of oil, of burnt plastics, of death filled the forest a moment before she leapt over a hill-sized fallen tree and saw it.

The small plane was a mangled mess. One wing was torn away, leaving a gaping black hole in the side. Overhead, giant firs swept the sky, hiding the crash site from aerial view.

Kawai-i hung her head as the sorrow washed over her. She fumbled with the commlink at her waist, sending their location to the other search crews.

The wolf was sniffing at the wreckage. He heard the sound before she did. A faint mewling, a cry more animal than human. She sprang forward, tearing at the jagged hole in the side of the wrecked plane. It was too small to fit through. Beside her, the wolf shifted, his grey form flowing like smoke into a long, lean, and shivering naked human.

"Hurry," she panted, and he scrambled onto her back, standing to reach the hole. He climbed inside, his bare skin tearing on the jagged metal. A second later, he passed a weeping armful of battered human out to her. He jumped out, landing on Kawai-i's back and clamping his legs around her. She turned and handed the limp human back to him.

"Chopper pilot says he can land a half-k north," she said, taking off in a smooth canter and mindful of his sensitive human skin. "And any riding jokes and we'll be seeing how well you regenerate."

She could feel her partner laughing, although he wisely remained silent.





- I know most of these files deal with critters—mundane, paranormal, or (heaven help me) emergent—I thought it would be appropriate to include some information on the non-metahuman sapients out there. Dr. Lucy Shapiro is a prominent xenoanthropologist who worked on the UNESCO racial diversity and sapience review a few months back. She's also one of the few metahumans who has done field research on a variety of non-meta sapient species, earning her international recognition as an expert on xenoanthropology. (Any human who can spend eighteen months living in Angkor Wat certainly deserves the title of expert, in my opinion.) FastJack has given her access to Jackpoint as my guest.

- Smiling Bandit

- I'll post a brief document I'd written for a *Popular Xenoanthropology* report on sapients and their challenges interacting with the meta-human world first, then I'll upload some of my journal notes from various field studies on different sapient cultures. Despite Bandit's glowing recommendation, I am not sufficiently familiar with digital sapients and free spirits to comment on those groups, and so they will be excluded from my report here. Also, while dragons are most certainly sapient, to date none have granted my many requests to study their culture—although I remain convinced there is an underlying cultural bond shared by the Great Dragons (but apparently only with each other).

- Dr. Lucy Shapiro

SAPIENT NON-METAHUMANS IN THE METAHUMAN WORLD

In April, the UN voted on the Recognition of Sapience accord, which would have granted a variety of sapient non-metahumans and digital constructs equal coverage under the UN's International Bill of Meta-Human Rights (IBMHR). While it passed on the floor, something happened during a closed-door session of the Security Council, and it was sent back for further review. A similar measure was placed in front of the Corporate Court, although it excluded digital constructs and was passed with a bare majority vote. I'll summarize what happened and then discuss what exactly this means for non-metahumans.

The failure to pass a measure in the UN means that the majority of sapient non-metahumans (I'll call them "sapients" for short) have no civil rights beyond what individual countries choose to grant. Sasquatches are the notable exception; in 2042 they were given full coverage under the IBMHR. This includes the right to a SIN in their country of origin, the abolishment of slave trade, hunting, and "harvesting" of sapient creatures, the right to own property, and the right to education, work, health care, and social services.

While some nations already provide protection to sapients within their borders, recognition from the UN would make it safe for sapients to travel outside those borders or integrate into metahuman society in countries that do not offer any protection. Without consistent global rights and recognition, sapients remain in a dangerous limbo. This is one reason, perhaps the largest, why sapients remain so isolated from metahumanity.

- Amazonia was one of the major backers of the Recognition of Sapience accord. With the revelation that the Amazonian government was harboring the Ghost Cartels responsible for tempo, its

political name turned to mud. It's no surprise that the accord failed. I heard that a strong Humanis bloc lobbied hard against the accord, using tempo as a rallying point. "Look at what one nation of non-metas did to humanity. Spreading drugs, disease, and death without regard to the value of human life," was the keynote of their lobby. Apparently it worked.

- Kia

- And I heard that it was the Japanese vote on the Security Council that overruled the accord. Word is they didn't like the inclusion of Als, and they've vowed to block any measure that comes through that contains protections for Als ...

- Fianchetto

GOING MAINSTREAM: INTEGRATING INTO METAHUMAN SOCIETY

For the time being, sapients continue to encounter some major obstacles when integrating into metahuman society. These range from physical barriers to social prejudices. Despite the danger, some make the choice to leave their native cultures and experience metahuman society.

SINs/IDs

The most challenging aspect for many sapients is the requirement for SINs and IDs. For example, in the UCAS non-metahumans can be eligible for a SIN only by act of Congress. Even sasquatches, who are eligible for a SIN, receive one automatically only if they are born to a parent with a SIN and their birth is recorded via traditional government channels. Otherwise, sasquatches born outside of metahuman channels (i.e., a hospital) must request a SIN like any other non-registered metahuman. Up until that point, they are considered "probationary citizens" and protected by basic metahuman rights.

Since many sapients are not aware of the need for IDs, they often have issues as soon as they enter metahuman society. Countries that recognize sapients generally have an office dedicated to assisting sapients as they adjust to metahuman society. In the NAN, for example, the PCC has a Non-Metahuman Liaison Officer stationed in every major city who is on call to help sapients with whatever issues they encounter. In countries without an outreach effort, the death rate among sapients entering metahuman society averages forty percent. This is only compounded by the technological ignorance of many sapients who do not have the basic knowledge (taken for granted by most sprawl residents) to operate wireless systems, commlinks, or RFID tags that are most commonly used to provide proof of ID.

- A quirk of many automated security systems: drones and surveillance systems are generally programmed with software and sensor suites designed to recognize metahumans only. The body language, heat patterns, facial recognition points, etc., from non-metas tend to throw those automated systems for a loop. Some will report a system anomaly and call the security spider. Others will call animal control officers with reports of a "lost pet." Still others will do nothing; their programming doesn't include what to do if a "horse" walks down the street.

- Glitch



Social

Another major issue for many sapient is the unfamiliar structure of metahuman society. Many sapient rely on social cues that are foreign to metahumanity, such as pheromones. Other social cues, such as metahuman body language, are difficult for many sapient to mimic, much less understand. Language is another significant barrier. While many sapient are capable of metahuman speech, few can incorporate the nuances of metahuman communication, which is a large hurdle without a lifetime of exposure to metahuman culture. Sapient I've worked with have universally expressed their difficulty with metahuman communication, and misreading body language is the primary complaint. Each sapient culture is unique, but some have common aspects—like wolf shapeshifters taking a simple metahuman smile as a prelude to an attack, or a naga mistaking open-mouth breathing as a signal of danger rather than a stuffed nose. Centaurs generally dislike crowds, and they are unnerved by the densely populated and confining spaces of many metahuman sprawls.

The difficulty goes both ways. While naga can speak verbally, they do not have a facial structure that lends expression to their speech. Many metahumans find the nuances of a naga's speech difficult to understand without the familiar facial expressions that normally indicate meaning such as sarcasm, humor, or puzzlement. In addition, the lack of eyelids on a naga means that they cannot blink, and staring is not an issue in naga culture. In metahuman society, an unblinking stare is often a show of aggression, a challenge, or an outright insult.

- Um, or it could simply be, you know, talking to a snake big enough to swallow me whole ...
- /dev/grrl
- Ophidiophobia (a fear of snakes) is one of the top metahuman phobias. Some studies have shown as many as fifty percent of metahumans have a mild-to-severe fear of snakes, with around eight percent having a full phobia, including panic attacks. Makes life as a naga pretty tough ...
- Sticks
- On the other side, every little (or big) girl who's ever dreamed of having a horse generally flocks to a centaur. They're babe magnets. Which works great if you've got a centaur on your crew and you're out trolling for a date. Not so great if you're actually trying to work and get swarmed by a flock of kids.
- Stone

Public Perception

Public perception of sapient is frequently the largest hurdle that a sapient encounters in metahuman society. Metahumans can view sapient with fear, prejudice, and outright hostility or with admiration, curiosity, and even avarice. Less extreme, but just as insulting, is the disregard for sapient's intelligence or self-awareness. This obviously differs by culture, even within the same national borders. In the UCAS, for example, the view among the Hindu population towards naga is generally quite positive, while in the same city Chinese apothecaries may sell naga bile, skin, and gallbladders as cures.

SAPIENT-FRIENDLY NATIONS

The Native American Nations
Amazonia
Asamando
Azania
The Awakened Yakut
Greece
India
Mongolia
Naga Kingdom
Tír Tairngire
Tír na nÓg

The public perception of sapient differs depending on the specific species. Sasquatches are fairly iconic and portrayed by the media in an overall positive light. On the other side, merrow are rarely encountered by sprawl citizens and hardly ever seen outside their own environment; scientific circles even debate their level of intelligence. All too frequently, public opinion is influenced by media images and propaganda. Metahumans often continue to think of sapient as dangerous animals. This view is one main reason why sapient and metahumanity clash.

However, there are nations where sapient are involved in both public life and the government. For example, Amazonia has integrated sapient and metahumans in their cities with very positive results. Metropole has a population that is estimated to be almost twenty percent sapient. This large population center has been purposely designed to integrate a variety of sapient, catering to their unique physiological needs while remaining a metahuman-friendly city. Kinshasa-Brazzaville is another large sprawl where sapient and metahumans successfully cohabitate. In these sprawls and others like them, the key seems to be the prominence of sapient in the government or ruling class, the purposeful education systems that place children of all species together for learning and socialization, and the large numbers of sapient as a stable population.

Adaptive Technology

One key aspect that both hinders and facilitates sapient integration into metahuman society is technology. Despite the numerous differences in sapient cultures, they all seem to share a low-tech lifestyle. Metahumanity is distinguished by our obsession with technology. From advanced health care knowledge to the wireless Matrix, it attracts numerous sapient who wish to learn (or simply observe or experience) the positive sides of scientific advancement.

But to interact with high-tech gear, some adaptations must be made to accommodate sapient's differing physiology. Naga, as an extreme example, have no hands or fingers to manipulate metahuman objects. Pixies and centaurs are both sized far outside of metahuman norms. Merrow and dolphins require equipment that can withstand an aquatic environment.

The wireless Matrix and advances in AR/VR technology have proved an overall boon to sapient. Trodes are much less intrusive than implanted datajacks, and there are several types of trodes on the market that are adaptable to sapient physiology. With

INCOMING FEED.....



many modern conveniences wirelessly enabled, a sapient can use AR to manipulate common metahuman technology that might otherwise prove difficult. Doors, vehicles, communication tools, electronics, and home appliances are all examples of devices that can be used through AR commands.

The drawback to this is that the wireless Matrix and associated technology are designed to be intuitive to metahumans. Images and interfaces are designed with metahuman psychology in mind. Since metahumans are primarily visually oriented, sapients who have other dominant senses can have issues dealing with the visual orientation of AR interfaces. Even simple things such as color choices can be difficult for sapients who do not see in metahuman color spectrums.

- Spirits are unable to view AR or experience simsense. The pervasiveness of the wireless Matrix is a growing problem for free spirits who wish to integrate into metahuman society or to disguise their nature from mundane metahumans. It is almost impossible for them to function at a "normal metahuman" level in modern sprawls.

- Man-of-Many-Names

- Evo manufactures trodes and electronics designed for some sapients, such as the naga and centaurs. NeoNET supposedly has designed special interfaces for pixies. Megacorps, and smaller corps with the budget and resources, often "customize" interfaces for their non-metahuman employees. There are dozens of corps in Amazonia that cater to non-metas, either adapting current gear and tech for them or creating new tech to assist them. They export as well ...

- Smiling Bandit

- I hear NeoNET has also made customized armor for their pixie employees and that SK has a line of armor designed for centaurs. But no one has yet figured out how to make usable armor for naga that doesn't impede their movement ... Ditto with guns for pixies; the little buggers are too small to use conventional firearms, and miniaturized guns don't pack enough of a punch to do much damage.

- Clockwork

- Wanna know how to piss off a pixie? Ask them if they shop in the doll-clothes aisle.

- /dev/grrl

Travel

Travel can be an issue for many sapients. Because different nations have different laws regarding sapient rights, not to mention the requirement for SIDs and IDs, travel is especially perilous for sapients. Most international airlines are corporate-owned, so they follow their own internal policies for allowing sapients on board. Even sapients planning to travel from one safe country to another have ended up in danger after having weather or malfunctions require an unscheduled stop in a country that does not recognize that sapient species. Additionally, standard aircraft are designed for metahuman-sized passengers, and larger sapients, such as naga or centaurs, are often forced to ride in cargo holds or animal holding pens. The comfort of metahuman passengers is also a large factor in where sapients travel; not many metahumans

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

P2.0 LIVE BLOG: USER: KAWAI-I

05.01.72, 10:43 AM

43 Subscribers

So, I lost a bet and my wager was to post a daily blog to pito for a full month. For starters, as my profile says, I'm a Pueblo cop. Because of some recent events—which I'm not going to discuss—I've been "temporarily reassigned" to the PR department in LA. Real fun. I went to ASU—go Sun Devils!—and majored in criminal justice. And I graduated in the top 7% of my class. I'm 23, single, female, and I'm currently training for my fifth marathon. I hear the San Rafael Mountain run is a real killer; can't wait. I'm also a centaur. Which is not a talking horse, thank you very much.

Anyway. That's it. There's my post for the day. I'll be back tomorrow.

05.04.72, 6:45 PM

1,209 Subscribers

Okay, lots of questions from those of you tuning in. And some of you are really quite sick. You realize I'm a cop, right? Maybe you should think before posting? So, Maurisa asked, "How do you get around LA?"

Well, there's always walking. Seriously, I've never met so many people who'd rather drive than walk a single block. Especially in this LA traffic, I can move much faster than you can in your little subcompact wedged into traffic. Pueblo law is a bit grey on centaurs and streets/sidewalks. I can use either, although I have to obey speed limits when on a public street. Not so on the sidewalks. Amazing how fast people move out of the way when I come barreling down a sidewalk at full-gallop. You pop your motorcycle up on a public sidewalk and just see how fast a Pueblo drone will be on your two-legged ass.

On the not-so-positive side, I've discovered a deep and abiding hatred of boats. Had to ride in one for the first time last week, and the stupid stairs down to the cabin were way too narrow for me to fit. I had to ride on the deck. Could barely keep my feet. Not fun. They don't make protective suits for the toxic water in centaur size either, so falling overboard would have been seriously nasty. Although I can swim pretty well.

Cars are a bit more problematic. Put it this way: If you can fit two trolls in it, side-by-side, I can probably manage. Can't ride a public bus, though—I can't maneuver through those narrow aisles. Pueblo's got a couple of Citymasters modified to fit the squads with centaur officers though, and while it's unpleasant, it works for short trips. I do not ride in the back of trucks or in horse trailers. Do you? I have a retrofitted Bulldog van that I can drive just fine using AR commands. Flying is another pain-in-the-ass. Despite being a full PCC citizen, most commercial flights aren't capable of

"seating" someone of my size. A couple of airlines have some aircraft that can remove a few of their first-class seats, but I have to remain lying down for the entire trip. Talk about being sore. And flying out of the PCC is a nightmare. The CAS doesn't even recognize centaurs for civil rights. Their backwards laws require that "live-stock" travel by cargo hold. Real fun to fly into Atlanta by first class and out by cargo hold. Although, being an "animal" meant no one could complain when I kicked that idiot baggage handler—Jose, remember me?—square in the chest for slapping me on the ass. Broke a few of his ribs. Nice thing about criminal justice. I do know the law. (In Pueblo, I'd have arrested him for striking an officer. But there was some satisfaction in hearing his ribs crack.) And, boy, I should probably stop right here for the night.

05.06.72 12:01 PM

28,084 Subscribers

So, best place to visit if you're a centaur? Amazonia. Actual enclaves in Metropole that are designed for centaur living. Houses built to scale. Elevators that you can fit in. Public access designed for a variety of non-metas. (Of course, I complain sometimes, but I don't have it bad at all compared to a naga. At least I have opposable thumbs.) Worst place to visit? Quebec. They still pay bounties on shapeshifters. On my first—and last—trip there, I saw a woman wearing boots made of naga-skin. I almost vomited. It was a three-day conference on metahuman trafficking. Attendees from police agencies—public and private—all across NorthAm. My partner and I were registered, but we were turned away by the hotel, despite our reservations. Not a single restaurant would let me in. Ended up sleeping and eating at the PCC embassy, traveling to the conference via a borrowed van. The conference was the worst; the guards at the door turned me away. Took a dozen other Pueblo cops to convince them otherwise.

At least I didn't have it as bad as my partner at the time. Wolf shapeshifter. Great at tracking things through the high country. Not so great at being polite when a Quebec cop tries to shoot you in the middle of a conference full of two hundred armed cops ...

05.10.72 9:00 PM

438,374 Subscribers

So, a little rant on non-meta rights. UN passed their Accord #139-X28 in April. Went to the Security Council. Closed door session, and suddenly Accord #139-X28 is back to the drawing board. I wasn't there, but I sure as hell was watching; me and a few hundred thousand other non-metas. I know some of you folks have posted replies to my blog, saying you know how I feel, saying you were SINless before the PCC came in, that you had

Urgent Message...

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE.....

no rights. Well, bullshit. You were still a metahuman. Sure, with less rights. But you had rights. The UN says that all metahumans must be treated with a minimum of civil rights, and all UN participants must abide by those minimums. You were at least recognized by your fellow metahumans as a sentient being, as having a soul, as having the ability to speak and act. Try being a shapeshifter in Quebec. Try being a centaur in the CAS. Try being a naga in the UCAS. You can legally buy naga skin products in several countries in North America. Try buying an ork skin suitcase lately? The UN accord would have meant that it would be illegal to pay bounties on the listed non-meta species. No more "shoot-on-sight" commands. No more having to ride in the cargo hold of a plane. No more being required to be "restrained" while in public. Six-foot leash my ass.

It passed, then one (or more) of the members of the Security Council vetoed it. It pisses me off. Not for me, not so much. The PCC, heck, all the NAN, are great places to live if you're a non-meta. But for the others. The kids who were like me. Taken from their families by poachers, sold on the open market; it isn't even considered against international law. Selling elf children is against international law. Why not centaur children? Because we have four hooves and a tail? Bullshit.

05.14.72 12:03 AM
1,034,933 Subscribers

So, Bob? Yeah, you. The guy who is about to hear someone knocking at his front door? See those two Pueblo cops? That's because soliciting a cop is against the freaking law!

For the record, I do not give "pony rides." Not even for the amount of nuyen Bob was offering.

And, no, really. I don't find metahuman males (or females) particularly attractive. I don't understand this metahuman obsession with sex. You two-leggers will screw anything that holds still long enough, I swear. I grew up in a metahuman community. I've dealt with the innuendos and the harassment. You'd think that fragile creatures like metahumans would stop and think before mouthing off to a creature who can unman you with one well-aimed kick from a hoof.

On a related note, I've got thousands of you asking me what dating is like for a centaur. I guess it's pretty much like it is for any non-meta in a meta city. Not like there are a lot of centaurs running around LA. I think I've met all three of them. And yeah, it can get pretty lonely. Be nice to have a real running partner, you know what I mean? But actual dates. Metas generally, what, go out to dinner, maybe catch a sim, go clubbing, go to the theatre, maybe a sporting event? Well, think about it. What restaurant am I going to comfortably fit in? Tables so close together I can't even swish my tail without getting some Duck a'la orange on it. Sims? Getting the "human" viewpoint and emotions and physical feelings is just creepy. Clubbing? Right. You ever see a centaur dance? It isn't pretty. Not to mention I have to constantly worry about stepping on someone in those crowded places, and I really hate crowds. Most centaurs hate crowds. And while I love sports, most stadiums are designed for metas. I can't even maneuver up the stairs in those places. And courtside seats aren't really in the budget for someone living on cop wages.

So, for the time being, I'm concentrating on my career. Not that I don't want kids, some day. But as for a partner? Or partners? Yeah, I don't see that happening. Not while I'm living in LA, at least. Maybe if I moved to Metropole ... they do have nice beaches in Metropole ...

are comfortable sharing an airplane cabin with a naga. Sapientes that appear less "foreign" to metahumans, such as sasquatches and pixies, are less likely to encounter this trouble.

- On the bright side, I know a naga who's shipped himself via cargo plane as "live animal, handle with caution" without having to worry about travel visas and SINS and other hassles the rest of the team dealt with.
- Stone
- A seal shapeshifter whom I've worked with in the past liked to brag about the time she shipped herself to a zoo in a highly secured corporate enclave, then shapeshifted in the middle of the night and walked out of the quarantine tanks. I can only imagine the looks on the faces of the staff when they got to work and were missing a seal.
- Lyran
- And on the other side, some countries (like Quebec) require a six-to-twelve week quarantine period for some types of imported

animals. Talk about screwing up travel plans. Just another reason it always pays to do your research. (And to know who to bribe.)

- Sticks

CORPORATE CITIZENS OR CORPORATE PETS

While the public rights of sapientes are still being determined, the Corporate Court recently passed a resolution recognizing the sapience of seven species. These species were nagas, centaurs, sasquatches, drakes, free spirits, ghouls, and pixies. (Although ghouls are not technically a different "species," they were included in the resolution.) Dragons, of course, have had full rights under the Corporate Court for decades. This means, for example, that the common practice of "capturing" nagas in the wild and enslaving them as "guard critters" is now banned for all corporations under the jurisdiction of the Corporate Court. Nagas currently held by a corporation must be given corporate citizenship or allowed to leave the corporation.

Individual corporations have full discretion on whether they wish to employ a sapient or offer them corporate citizenship.

However, the resolution is a landmark in sapient rights, and hopefully pressure on the UN will have a similar measure follow shortly.

- The doc is an idealist, or just very, very naive. Like having the CC say “you can’t do this” is going to stop a corp?
- Beaker
- Oh, believe me. The CC has ways of enforcing its will.
- Kay St. Irregular

NON-METAHUMAN SOCIETIES

Most sapients live within their own societies rather than metahuman society. Understanding sapients begins with understanding their cultures and world views, including their spirituality, their use (or non-use) of technology, their conflict resolution methods, and their leadership or political organizational systems.

Many non-meta societies are insular. They are often isolated geographically from other similar groups, although some communication, trade, and individuals do travel between the groups to share ideas and to ensure ethnic and genetic diversity. One of the largest issues facing sapient societies is the isolation from other similar groups. The other large issue is the encroachment of metahumanity into the territory necessary to maintain the sapient society, causing stress within the society and conflicts between metahumans and sapients.

TECHNOLOGY USAGE

Most sapients live in low-tech societies. While many define these societies as “primitive,” it is more correct to say they are not reliant upon technology in their daily lifestyles. All sapients have shown an ability to use metahuman technology to their advantage, regardless of its complexity. For decades, many within corporate (and even scientific) circles have argued that the lack of technological sophistication was proof that the various non-meta beings were non-sapient. One of the largest and most widespread examples of this willful ignorance and abuse of non-metas is the (continuing) capture and sale of naga as “security critters.” Despite the fact that kidnapped naga were quickly able to learn to use metahuman technology, even to the point of becoming able security hackers and software programmers, corporations continued to label naga as “animals” and buy and sell them. Even their facility with metahuman languages was not enough to dissuade their corporate masters.

By and large, sapients eschew metahuman technology for a more basic lifestyle. This desire to live in tune with nature is not a sign of lower intelligence but a purposeful choice that fits their culture and society.

Sapient societies also frequently have a much higher percentage of their population that are Awakened, and they frequently rely on magical means to accomplish many of the tasks for which metahumans rely upon technology.

Aetherpedia Keyword Search: Society

A society is a population of metahumans (sentient beings) characterized by patterns of relationships between individuals that share similar and defining culture, behaviors, institutions, and traditions. A society may be made up of people with similar ethnic heritages or a broader cultural/national group. A society is generally made of people who share economic, political, social, and industrial infrastructure.

Defining Primitive

Among some schools of thought, the lack of major signs of economic, technological, or modern development is a mark of a “primitive society.” While many xenoanthropologists refuse to use the “primitive” label—and it has fallen out of favor among many academic circles, if not corporate—most metahumans still refer to non-meta cultures as primitive.

However, while these societies have not developed technological sophistication, they have generally developed other areas of their society. Rather than developing their economic and technological aspects, the non-meta cultures are generally more innovative and highly developed in areas of artistic expression, spiritual beliefs, rituals, traditions, ceremonies, magical knowledge and practical experience, and other non-tangible facets of their culture.

This lack of materialism is often one jarring cultural divide between sapients and metahumanity.

SPIRITUALITY

Sweeping generalizations on sapient spirituality are difficult to make and generally inaccurate. However, one very clear difference between metahumanity and sapients is the overall importance of spirituality. The Awakening brought a renewed interest in religion and spirituality to metahumanity. Still, few metahumans would place religion as the most important aspect of their lives; work and corporate loyalties generally hold the premiere place in metahuman daily life. Not so for sapients. Spirituality—which encompasses religious views—is woven into the daily fabric of their lives and into every aspect of their social interactions. I would strongly recommend reading any of the Wilkenset’s Essays on sapient spirituality if you ever interact with a sapient or plan to travel to their territories.

Many sapient societies tie their spirituality in with their viewpoint on magic. Indeed, many have remarkable parallels to shamanism.

- Shamanism in non-meta cultures is pretty common, at least in my experience. I follow Wolf, many of you know that. I know a wolf shapeshifter shaman, who also follows Wolf—as I understand it, a fairly common occurrence among shapeshifter magicians. He and I have had remarkably similar experiences in our magical journeys, and we both understand each other when discussing our magic (if nothing else). I actually envy him; his spirituality and connection to Wolf seems completely unshakable, without any of the questioning, soul-searching, or doubt that plague us metahumans on our own spiritual journey.
- Lyran

THE ORIGIN OF SAPIENT CULTURE

One of the driving questions of xenoanthropology is just how sapient culture formed. While some are obvious extensions of mundane animal socialization patterns, imposed by metahumans, or adapted by observation of metahuman society, a mysterious few are inexplicably more elaborate and constructed. Numerous studies have shown that the Kerrigan, the naga of Angkor Wat, and dragons seem to have cultures with the same rich contextual aspects as a culture that has developed over centuries. Since sapients first appeared approximately sixty years ago; this is a true puzzle.

These limited groups appear to have a fairly continuous culture. Theories on this range from fringe to fairly well-respected, and all have some groups who support them. A few theories are:

Cultural Continuity: The sapients may actually have a culture that stretches back to a previous age of magic, with the "downcycle" not interfering with the members either because they were in a magical hibernation or because they managed to stay secluded in an area that retained its potency during the downcycle.

Spirit Mentors: Guidance from spirits (seen as their "gods") assisted the society with establishing their mythology, cultural behaviors, and rituals. In this theory, researchers believe that the elevation of Awakened members of the society—who often follow shamanistic belief patterns—to positions of leadership helps facilitate the communication between the spirits and the sapients.

Preserved Memories: Some research by fringe groups postulates that some Awakened species retain memories and societal behaviors from a previous age of magic. These memories were embedded in their DNA and passed down through the generations during the "downcycle." When the sapients Awakened (which they suggest occurred much like the goblinization of orks and trolls from humans), their memories awakened with them.

Metahuman Cultural Influences (theory 1): Metahumans interacting with the sapients enforced their beliefs on them, raising the sapients with a set of expectations and cultural guidance that the sapients, knowing nothing else, adapted and embraced.

Metahuman Cultural Influences (theory 2): The strength of belief of metahuman mythology and religion somehow "formed" sapient creatures, complete with ancient cultures, out of shared metahuman consciousness.

- Hey, she forgot the "Dragon Conspiracy," where dragons created the critters out of the mists of time and use them as their earthbound minions ...

- Plan 9

IN-DEPTH WITH ...

- I thought you might enjoy seeing some of my field journal entries from my field work with a variety of sapient societies.

- Dr. Lucy Shapiro

NAGA

Naga culture seems to flow from Angkor Wat, the naga kingdom. While there are colonies and family groups of naga who live spread around the globe—either from their own appearance in an area, importation by metahumans, or by colonization by the naga from another area—most naga acknowledge Angkor Wat as their "homeland." The Nagaraja—king of Angkor Wat—is considered the king of all naga, and many naga, even those living on different continents or behind corporate walls, follow the decrees he issues from Angkor Wat. The king is also seen as the spokesperson for all naga to the "higher" spirits (although in their highly ritualized religion, any shaman can communicate directly with the "lower" spirits). Naga culture is also highly ritualized, with a rigid class system, intricate laws and cultural mores, and an extremely well-developed appreciation for the arts.

Like other reptiles, naga are cold-blooded, so they naturally tend to inhabit temperate or tropical regions. Naga live in large family groups, often with thirty or more members of a family sharing living arrangements. Conservation of their body heat may be one reason that family groups tend to sleep entwined in one area—indeed, it is considered highly unnatural to a naga to sleep alone.

Of course, naga raised separately from their families—often victims of metahuman enslavement—tend to have more "metahuman" views on many of these issues and have a difficult time acclimating to naga culture when they are reunited with their families.

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Field Journal

[July 17, 2068]

Arrived at Angkor Wat today. Traveled with the Atlantean crew. Must say they are the most competent crew I've ever worked with. Apparently the Atlantean Foundation has some ties to the monarchy in Angkor Wat. They'll stay for two days, then leave me here—assuming I can negotiate with the naga for the privilege of remaining here with them.

The first sign we had entered the naga nation was the sudden appearance of two large naga, backed by several large spirits. I assume they were using magic to hide themselves. The prevalence of metahuman hunters and corporate "harvesting" teams mean that metahumans are viewed with suspicion or hostility in naga territory. We each submitted to a magical mind probe by the larger naga—a highly trained magician, obviously—and was that a strange feeling! Very alien. Just another reminder that the naga rely on magic, so I better get used to it. The AF crew leader said that mind probes are common among the naga of Angkor Wat and considered a quick and easy way to communicate. Willing or not. (He also informed me that influence magics are strictly taboo.) Luckily, the leader of the AF crew was recognized, and we were allowed to proceed. When we arrived in the city, I was barely able to contain my excitement. Not knowing the naga's

views on photography, I did some quick sketches of the city. Drew a crowd of young naga who were apparently fascinated by my artistic ability (such as it is). In the nature of youths everywhere, they were curious and outgoing. I did several sketches of them, using colored ink to capture the vivid rainbow hues of their scales. The young all spoke Khmer Nāga. I have a full set of linguasofts, but unfortunately that isn't commercially available. Still, by the time the AF crew returned from their meeting, I had picked up the basics: hello, my name is, please, thank you. I'd also learned that naga apparently do not like human laughter. I'll have to discover if it is the sound or the facial expression ...

Was invited to stay with several naga families. Angkor Wat has buildings—primarily stone—which the naga use for their homes. They sleep in family groups, all together. I assume this has evolved from a need to conserve heat. I declined, preferring my solo tent. Not that I am afraid of snakes, but I would worry about being crushed ... I can already tell this may be an issue; I may have to discover a way to safely sleep with the naga if I wish to avoid insulting my hosts. [note to self: have several doses of antivenom with me; must ask if the naga healers have any natural remedies?]

Field Journal [July 23, 2068]

On my own for four days. Today I met with the Nagaraja. He's an extraordinarily beautiful naga with deep blue scales (and at 17 meters long, he's also extraordinarily large). I was invited to dinner with the royal family, which included the Nagaraja, his three mates, and a dozen of his grown offspring. The Nagaraja is by all accounts a clever and skilled diplomat, multilingual, and well-versed in metahuman culture. He seemed pleased that I'd already begun to master rudimentary Khmer Nāga; good thing, since that was the primary language at dinner.

He did honor me by presenting me with the choice offering at dinner. Which happened to be a live rabbit. Thank goodness I invested in that digestive ware. Had a few bad moments when I first bit in.

Naga have the most expressive faces, although they cannot blink. Maintaining eye contact is difficult, but glancing away ends a conversation. [note to self: eye drops would be useful.] Naga appear unusually interested in my ability to blink. I've had a dozen of them "finger" my eyelids, which is, ah, uncomfortable. Also had a few strange moments when a pair of youths decided to "experience" my senses. Magic use on other beings is considered permissible, within limits. I have yet to see a naga use magic against another naga in a manipulative or hostile way. Where I find mind probes intrusive, they have evolved to see them as efficient communication methods. [note to self: is the presence of so many magically active an effective policing method to prevent magical abuse? More research needed.]

Magic is pervasive in Angkor Wat, although from my observation only about a third of the naga are magically active. Their external economy (trade goods with metahumans) is based on mined emeralds and gathered tesma. With no hands, the work falls on those naga who are able to manipulate their surroundings with magic. The non-magical appear to rely upon the magical for many functions, from building living structures to magical healing. I've seen dozens of examples where a magician casts a spell

for (or on) a non-magician naga without being asked. [note to self: must work harder not to put human feelings onto my observations; my view of the magical naga viewing the non-magician naga as "handicapped" is anthropomorphic.] There is a distinct dichotomy within their society, with the magically active blatantly favored in politics and customs.

After dinner were music, story recitation, and dancing. The music and stories were accompanied by elaborate illusions. I assume portions of the display were visible on the astral plane; naga are dual-natured. Unfortunately, I am not; I wonder how much of the display I was missing.

Remembered not to laugh or smile with open mouth. No yawning!!! Makes naga nervous; open mouth is sign of danger. Had several naga mind-probe me when I yawned on accident, trying to learn what I was afraid of. No more yawning!

Field Journal [September 8, 2068]

Attended a hatching ceremony today. Only females attended; the males are not allowed in the hatching grounds (apparently for ceremonial reasons only; I've seen evidence that both male and female naga are equally responsible for caring for the young). Naga are ovoviviparous. The mother gestates the eggs for six months, then lays the eggs. They hatch within twenty four hours of being laid. Apparently the time of day they hatch is culturally significant. This clutch hatched at moon-rise, and the mother was extremely proud [note to self: discover if mothers have control over laying time?] The ceremony lasted from when the eggs were laid until the last one hatched, and several dozen females stayed in attendance for the entire period. They sang in shifts; it was eerily beautiful and very evocative. When the first egg began to hatch, all the females began singing. Each infant was fed immediately upon hatching, a chosen female providing a live mouse. I gather that the feeding was another part of the ritual. I'm told that the infant bonds closely to the first naga to feed it, and that the chosen female will become the infant's mentor. Perhaps "godmother" would be a closer translation? That female gives the infant their childhood name; upon adulthood the naga will choose its own adult name. I also was told that the infants will be fully grown and sexually mature within three to four years, although they are still considered minors until six to eight years of age—which apparently is when naga magicians Awaken. After hatching, the mother will remain with the infants in the hatching cave for another seven days, and then the mother and the "godmothers" will escort the infants out to meet their father and the rest of their extended family. At that point there will be a large party. [note to self: need to bring appropriate hatching-party gift. Naga appreciate music; maybe lullabies?]

Field Journal [February 10, 2069]

Courtship among naga appears to be almost non-existent, with marriages arranged by fathers or male elders. Among the higher-ranking naga, betrothals can occur shortly after hatching. Marriages can occur any time after the eighth year, unless the youth Awakens. Awakened youth enter an apprenticeship program and do not marry until they complete it. Naga marriages appear to be life-long, from my observations, although widowed spouses can

negotiate a new marriage. A fairly high fatality rate makes this pretty common. The Awakened naga of both genders generally have multiple spouses, while the mundane appear limited to a single spouse. (Another example of the favoritism experienced by the Awakened.) I haven't seen or heard of any illegitimate offspring; the naga I've asked don't seem to understand the concept. Could this be cultural?

I bring this up because last night, a young naga left Angkor Wat, presumably to escape an unwanted marriage. He left with a pouch of emeralds. Rangsey tells me that the young naga will probably attempt to make it to a metahuman city and enroll in a university. He wasn't from a high-ranking family, so the Nagaraja won't pursue him. It's fairly dangerous beyond Angkor Wat; metahuman hunters lurk beyond the borders, hoping to capture or kill lone naga for slavery or for the lucrative Chinese medicine trade. Poor kid. I hope he makes it.

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CENTAURS

Centaur culture varies depending on the particular location and family groups (called tribes, communities, or herds), perhaps more so than any other related sapients. (Note that I'll use the term "tribe" here, although it is only one of many appropriate descriptors.) Where one tribe may be monogamous and raise children in small family units, another tribe may have multiple relationships among adults and raise all children communally. For all their differences, however, centaur tribes share some specific aspects. These include a strong shamanistic spiritual outlook, a preference for a hunter/gatherer lifestyle, and a strong sense of self-sufficiency. Centaur tribes also share many specific cultural and communication cues, such as body language—this is despite a broad diversity of spoken languages and a broad geographical separation.

Housing—whether permanent, like the Lake Louise community, or temporary, like that of the nomadic Mongolian tribes—is generally hand-crafted and built with care. Structures are single-story, and stairs are extremely rare.

Leadership

Most centaur tribes have a strict hierarchical structure, with a strong leader and a clear understanding of rank among all adult members. The leader of the tribe can be either male or female. However, one thing I've noted is that in tribes led by a male, the second-in-command is always female. Tribes led by a female have roughly even numbers of male and female second-in-commands. Rank in the tribe seems to be established by force of personality; from my observations, actual physical challenges are rare. Perhaps surprisingly, having magical talents does not seem to have a direct correlation to rank.

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Field Journal: Mongolia

[July 14, 2065]

After attending the Naadam festivals in Ulaanbaatar, I have secured permission to travel the remainder of the summer with Swiftly Climbs Mountains, a nomadic centaur tribe. Their tribe won several honors in the festival, and a team of four young women took home honors in the archery contest, each winning a

title of National Markswoman. [note: general agreement among metahuman researchers use mare/stallion/foal for gender assignments, but I've learned the centaurs refer to themselves as woman/man/infant—using equine equivalents is a particular insult.] I gather this is a significant honor for the tribe—they celebrated all night. I can only imagine how they are all up and moving at this early hour. I've secured a sturdy pony for the trip, knowing I cannot walk to keep up with them and was firmly discouraged from using a motorized vehicle. Well, little White-Foot and I will get along just fine—he seems content to follow the (much larger) lead centaurs. I have loaded up a Khalkha Mongolian linguasoft and tutorsoft; I will endeavor to learn the language as quickly as possible under these conditions.

Field Journal

[July 15, 2065]

I've never been so sore in my life. Sings-While-Running, the tribe's healer, took pity on me and gave me a strongly brewed tea, which helped a bit, but I slipped out a few of my emergency stash of aspirin. Sings-While-Running assures me that I will become accustomed to the pace in a few days. I've already seen that physical stamina is highly valued. Despite what must have been massive hangovers from the all-night party, there was not a single whimper or complaint when the headwoman ordered the camp struck at an hour before dawn. And they moved at a quick pace for the entire day, not bothering to set up camp that night, and struck out again this morning before dawn. Even the young baby kept up.

The tribe consists of eighteen adults, five juveniles (ages 3 to 17), and a three-month old baby. The baby is the daughter of the headwoman, as is one of the juveniles—one of the teenagers who won the archery contest. I've already learned the ranks of each adult member. Interesting, and easy to pick up from observation. At the evening camp, the communal meal was served in what must have been an order of rank. I was served near the end. I noted that the children were served when their mothers were—other observations during the day seemed to confirm that children hold the same rank as their mothers. The lower-ranked members were tolerant of the children's games. When a game of tag (or chase—it must be a universal game that crosses species) ran into a man, he began to scold the children. A look from one mother—apparently higher ranked—was enough to make him back down. Interesting.

The hierarchy appears very rigid. Body language and verbal language seem to reinforce the hierarchy. [note: I hope while I'm here I'll observe the centaurs resolve a leadership challenge.]

Daily chores and life seem to run smoothly, however, with every person secure in their place in the tribe. Even the lower-ranked members seem content with their place. [note to self: bring up "ambition" to Sings-While-Running.]

Field Journal

[July 31, 2065]

We entered the mountains a few days ago. Every morning, outlying scouts leave the primary tribe. Since they return in the evening with game, I had assumed they were hunting; the centaurs live on a primarily meat diet, supplemented with goat milk from their herds. Milk is drunk at almost every meal or turned into hearty soups. Swiftly Climbs Mountains survive in



the otherwise rugged mountains through the scouts' ability to hunt and track prey. The metahuman tribes tend to be sparse in the rugged mountains; Mongolia as a whole has a very low population. According to Sings-While-Running, the tribe will spend the summer months crossing the mountains and collecting Awakened plants, which they turn into potions or trade. The centaurs' ability to find even small amounts of game and locate specific Awakened plants means they have a distinct advantage over the metahuman nomads.

It is startling to see just how much the centaurs consume. I can only wonder how centaur tribes that don't subsist on such a high-fat, high-protein diet can possibly manage. [note to self: research centaur physiology and digestive systems.]

Field Journal

[August 18, 2065]

Note the absence of journal entries. Discovered interesting facet of centaur community and personal boundaries. Centaurs, with their magical ability to find—well, find just about anything, it seems—have a very different sense of personal property. My electronic journal was missing from my packs when I returned to camp four days ago after traveling with the scouts. Although I asked, no one seemed interested in answering me. Miscommunication. I hesitated to accuse anyone of theft. Finally today, Sunlight-In-Snow asked me why I was not writing in my “human speaking machine.” Sunlight-In-Snow is a blunt young male, with no tact, ranked eighth in the tribe. [note: I have labeled each person in the tribe by rank, including the children; the baby has the rank of her mother (1).] I told him someone had taken it, but I did not know who. He quickly told me that White-Dapple (rank: 5) had it; the teenage daughter of the headwoman. Apparently everyone had assumed I knew where it was and was fine with the girl using it.

Within the Swiftly Climbs Mountains tribe, there is apparently no concept of “stealing” or “theft.” How can it be theft if the owner knows where their property is?

Field Journal

[Sept 8, 2065]

Left the tribe today with a group of five females. They will be hunting and camping nearby, but separate from, the tribe.

Normally the scouting groups are of mixed gender, and they always return to the security of the main tribe for the night. I am puzzled by this gender split. White-Dapple is leading the group; at seventeen, she is the oldest. The youngest is nine; all the young women in this group are considered adolescents. We traveled a few kilometers away from the tribe and set up the ger (yurt-like tents). I assume we will be here for several days. Interesting to note that as they unpacked their gear, I saw the first evidence of metahuman rifles and guns. Normally the centaurs use traditional bows and arrows.

Field Journal

[Sept 9, 2065]

I learned the reason for the split group. Several of the young women are entering puberty. While the tribe does not consider a centaur an adult until between sixteen and eighteen, the young become sexually mature around the age of nine or ten. Like equines, the estrus cycle is pronounced. [link to equine ovulation cycles]

While the girls are young, they will separate from the main tribe during their cycles. White-Dapple tells me this “keeps the peace” in the tribe.

It is also apparently dangerous, due to poachers and metahumans in the mountains—who, White-Dapple tells me, cross over from Russia and look for small groups of centaurs to prey upon. Hence the powerful firearms. I gather that the Swiftly Climbs Mountain tribe has lost several members of their tribe in the past.

White-Dapple, when asked, simply says that the risks are preferable to the alternative. [note to self: research effect of pheromones on male centaurs.]

Because of the harsh environment here, the tribe consciously limits themselves to one child per season. This appears to be a cultural trait specific to this region; I have not heard of the centaur communities in Greece or the NAN doing this.

However, I also know that in the NAN, at least, there exist medications to inhibit the centaur cycles. I wonder if these medications help the communities of centaurs in larger metropolitan areas such as Metropole “keep the peace”?

Field Journal

[October 1, 2065]

Swiftly Climbs Mountains has arrived at a camp outside Ulaanbaatar. They plan to trade their summer harvest of telesma and potions for supplies to get through the winter. I will be leaving the tribe here.

White-Dapple has informed her mother that she will also be leaving the tribe. She wishes to join a mercenary company and “see the world.” With her title of National Markswoman, the merc company will accept her. The headwoman reluctantly agreed. White-Dapple is a talented young woman, intelligent, and a natural born leader. From knowing her, I could tell that she was struggling with wanting to lead her own tribe and not wanting to challenge her mother for leadership.

The tribe sent her off with a pack of supplies, her own bow and arrows, and a number of good-luck charms fashioned by the tribe shaman.

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SHAPESHIFTERS

More than any other sapient species, shapeshifters are firmly tied to their base species' social cues and structure. Jaguars, for example, are predominantly solitary and defend their territory against other jaguars (shapeshifters or mundane). A male's territory is often two to three times the size of a female's, and while a male and female's territory might overlap, a male will not allow any other males within his territory. Jaguars socialize for mating purposes only, and the only social structure is between a female and her dependent offspring. With this natural tendency, Jaguar shapeshifters often have a difficult time with metahuman society.

- Amazonia has its share of jaguar shifters, and some of them even enter the intelligence service, operating as independent and solitary agents ... which is about the only place a jaguar shifter ends up, considering their general antisocial behaviors. I've met two who don't fit the stereotype, but both were female.

- Glasswalker



INCOMING FEED.....



Lions and wolves are opposite, forming complex social groups and integrating with metahumanity with (more or less) success when they choose. Many lion and wolf shapeshifters intermingle with their non-shapeshifting kin, although it has been frequently noted that, in packs and prides with one or more shapeshifter members, a shapeshifter is generally the dominant member of the group. Shapeshifters also are believed to interbreed with their mundane kin. Although shapeshifters generally mature at the same rate as their non-shapeshifting kin, shapeshifter parents have been observed nursing and nurturing their shapeshifting offspring longer than their non-shapeshifting offspring. My personal theory is that this extended nurturing is necessary for the full development of cognitive functions. Biologically, sapient brains need higher caloric content during infancy to develop to full potential; numerous studies on the correlation between early malnutrition and lower IQs has proven this for metahumans. In addition, in metahumanity there is an imperative need for physical contact and nurturing during infancy, without which infants can and do fail to develop normal brain functions. (At the extreme, examples of infant deaths have been recorded.) Research has not proven that sapient creatures share these same needs, but there seems to be anecdotal evidence that supports my theory.

Preferential treatment not only ensures the survival of their offspring but seems to provide an advantage to the shapeshifters. This advantage could also be attributed to the parent's place in the pack/pride, which ensures their offspring get more resources or that they are the only ones who reproduce (as is frequently seen within wolf packs).

Other species reflect their parent species to a similar degree. While some species have well-documented instances of shapeshifters, theoretically any animal species could give rise to a shapeshifter variant. The best known shapeshifters are those that interact with metahumanity to some degree.

- And while the doctor doesn't say it, those countries that are friendly to shapeshifters tend to have a larger population of shifters that openly interact with metahumanity. The NAN, Aztlan, Amazonia, Azania, and of course, the Awakened Yakut have the largest known populations.

- Lyran

- Perhaps because of this, many NAN citizens don't blink when they see a giant bear lumbering down a city sidewalk. Of course, the Sioux require mandatory "cross-species understanding" classes starting in primary school. Helps when metahuman citizens encounter sentient critters (or paracritters, or even mundane critters).

- DangerSensei

// upload Uniformat text file :: user Dr. Lucy Shapiro //
Field Journal
[April 1, 2071]

Started my one-month trip to a wolf shapeshifter's territory in the Sioux. I've been invited (for once) for a specific purpose. When the Sioux government heard I was doing my research for the UN report on sapients, they extended an invitation to observe a shapeshifter pack firsthand. Akecheta, the wolf in question, is a member of the Sioux Wildcats. He has a mate and several young

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE



offspring. He had planned on bringing a human into their den to “familiarize my children with human scents,” and I guess I’m the lucky human. From what I’ve been told, his mate, Eyota, is the leader of a mixed pack of shapeshifters and mundane wolves. He seems confident she’ll accept me, but he hasn’t told her of my arrival. I wonder if female shapeshifters are as likely to be offended at unexpected guests as female metahumans would be?

Field Journal
[April 2, 2071]

Met the pack last night. Eyota is an impressive-sized female who was not pleased with the unexpected guest, but I gather they resolved the issue. The “argument” seemed violent to me, but there were no lasting injuries, so I guess it went well. There are five other shapeshifter wolves, Akecheta and Eyota’s two older sons, Enapay and Hanska (both of whom are three years old but appear to be full grown metahumans). There are also three young offspring, each of whom is a shapeshifter. Akecheta told his mate that I would teach the young ones to speak English. Apparently my time here will be well spent. There are also several mundane wolves in the pack, but they shied away from meeting me. Akecheta said they’ll listen to Eyota’s commands.

I did ask how they communicate with the mundane wolves and how they learned to speak a metahuman language. Akecheta told me that he was born knowing how to communicate with the wolves and that while they did not speak a complex language, they had body language as well as a variety of vocalizations. We spoke at some length on the concept, which I find fascinating. As for metahuman language, his own father taught him to speak Sioux, as he and his mate have taught their own young. The young are only a few months old but already half grown. They were eager to show off their transformation into and out of metahuman form. While Akecheta said they were born around the New Year, they appeared to be children around eight years of age in metahuman form. Interestingly, in metahuman form they spoke in a mixture of broken Sioux interspersed with whines, growls, and yips.

Another quirk. Enapay was in wolf form when I arrived, and he sniffed me carefully all over, rather like a (very, very) large dog. Hanska did the same, but in metahuman form. Which was a bit disconcerting. I can easily see how a shapeshifter could get into trouble in metahuman society (since many jurisdictions would consider that behavior, ah, inappropriate for a man to do

to a woman in public, if not outright illegal). [note to self: despite metahuman appearance, the wolf shapeshifters retain their highly developed sense of smell. Structural differences in their physiology? Or magic-based senses? Needs further research.]

Field Journal
[April 18, 2071]

I have been finally accepted by Eyota, and the mundane wolves (three of them) are more and more relaxed in my presence. I know that the wolves rub their scent against me (rather like reverse petting when in wolf form; I’ve firmly discouraged it in human form, mostly with Hanska) daily, and this has helped the mundane wolves feel more comfortable. The young have grown immensely since I’ve been here. In metahuman form, they appear to have aged a full year. They are quickly picking up English and speaking Sioux much more fluently. Learning rates appear to be accelerated similar to growth rates. As I suspected, Eyota spends far more time with them than a mundane wolf would spend with offspring of similar age. I note that they are also still nursing heavily, while normal wolf pups would be weaned at this age. [note: I asked Eyota for a sample of milk to compare caloric content to normal wolf milk; the caloric content was three times that of normal wolf milk, with a much higher ratio of fats.]

The pups are very subservient to their parents. The two older offspring, although only three years old chronologically, are fully grown and mature; it is interesting to note that while they are physically mature, mentally they appear to still be in their mid-teens. (I’ve brought a variety of “mental” tests, which Hanska has eagerly taken.) Akecheta plans to take Hanska back with him when he returns to the Sioux forces and enroll him in the military. Apparently both boys are old enough that they are considering dispersing to their own territory. Enapay seems likely to leave and find his own territory; he, like his mother, is less interested in metahumanity.

Like normal wolves, Eyota has strong body language and is quick to react violently when off-balance or in danger. Akecheta is much less instinctual, more mellow. I’m not sure if this is due to his nature or to extensive exposure to metahuman culture, forcing him to check his natural instincts. Likely some of both. Akecheta is in his twenties, while Eyota is only six. Age brings some wisdom, regardless of the species.

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You wanted to know what it's like. I'm not sure I'm the right one to tell you, but I guess I'm the only one you've got connections with. Lucky me.

It's not like what you see on the trid. There, they sex it up something fierce, make it look like the best fucking orgasm anybody's ever had. It's quick, too. A little nip, some moaning, a few drops of red paint here and there, and boom! There's a new vampire standing there beside the one who made him.

That's so much bullshit, I can't begin to tell you.

First of all, it's not quick. It takes a long damn time to die like that, bleeding to death, cold and alone and scared, with some monster sucking out your soul. It hurts, too, like bathing your nerve endings in acid. You want to scream, but the fear and the pain make you silent, and even if you could make a sound, you're too weak from loss of blood. When the darkness comes for you, it's a blessing, but then you wake up again, and you know the blessing has turned to damnation.

You usually wake up alone; the monster who turned you doesn't typically stick around to show you the ropes. Worse than waking up alone, though ... you wake up hungry. It's not your belly that's empty, Tommy, it's your soul, and what you feel when you first wake up like that is just like dying all over again, only worse. You'll do anything to make it stop, and the first time you kill someone so that you don't die yourself, it's almost always messy. That's another thing the trid gets wrong.

You chase them down and you drink their blood and their soul and their fear, and you don't give a damn what you're doing because satisfying the hunger is all you care about. After you come back to yourself, you remember what it was like to die that way. You couldn't scream then, just like they couldn't scream as you killed them, so when it's finally over you scream for the both of you.

It leaves a scar. Not on your body ... no, that wound has long since healed. But it leaves a scar on your soul. After a while, it becomes so calloused that you can't feel what you're doing anymore; it's hard to say sometimes if that's a blessing or a curse, though I personally lean towards the latter. Some vampires revel in what they are, while others are so repulsed by what they've become that they end their own lives. For most of us, though, survival is so much a part of our new instincts that we let our consciences fall away piece by piece, let ourselves maim and kill other people just so we can draw breath for another night.

I'll write some more later, Tommy. Supper's here ... and for what we're about to receive, may God forgive me.





• Despite our accumulated knowledge to date, we still tend to classify victims of HMMHV as “critters” rather than “beings,” something this document probably won’t do much to correct. As I was putting all this together, I found a transcript of a popular seminar for laymen given at Texas A&M&M by Thomas McAllister, M.D., Th.D., one of the leading experts in the CAS on the Human-Metahuman Vampiric Virus. I did some poking around, and it seems that Dr. McAllister has played a significant part in a lot of cutting-edge research into this disease over the last 15 years or so. He’s also a highly sought-after speaker because he can put some of the complexities of HMMHV into terms that the average person can understand.

• FastJack

It’s difficult calling HMMHV a plague sometimes, at least in the modern sense of the word. It’s a remarkably rare disease, certainly nowhere near as widespread as AIDS at the end of the 20th century or VITAS earlier in this one. Taken in the more classical sense of the word, however, if the Human-Metahuman Vampiric Virus doesn’t qualify as a plague, then nothing does.

It’s been with us since the Awakening some sixty years ago, although it wasn’t actually identified as a disease until 2034. Since 2011, HMMHV has Infected, worldwide, hundreds of thousands of individuals from six sapient species; that number rises into the tens of millions when you count ghouls. Countless more have died at the hands of the victims of the disease, which turns even the gentlest of souls into ruthless, predatory killers. It has shown us that magic can, and often does, trump medical science when it comes to viciousness of purpose. HMMHV seems to exist to give those who study it gray hair, stomach ulcers, and unending lessons in humility. Each discovery we’ve made has led us to more questions than we started with, and we are no closer now to curing this disease than we were forty years ago.

When all is said and done, here’s what the scientific community knows for certain about HMMHV: it’s a magical disease, and as such it lives by its own logic, which frequently defies our own. The malicious little bastard does what it damn well pleases, when it damn well pleases, to whom it damn well pleases. All the rest is details.

• Such comforting, rock-solid certainty.

• Haze

• Hey, if we were certain about things, it wouldn’t be science anymore. It would be reference.

• Nephrine

• Waitaminnit. Six sapient species? There were only five metahuman species last time I checked.

• Hard Exit

• Leave it to you to restrict sentience to homo sapiens. Sasquatches are also susceptible to the ghilani retroviruses, specifically the moneriviridae subgenus. There’s also new evidence which shows that other potentially sapient species may be susceptible, but there’s nothing concrete on that front at the moment.

• Hannibelle

• Maybe “plague” isn’t such a bad word after all.

• Haze

Aetherpedia Entry: HMMHV Varieties

HMMHV I: GHILANI VRYKOLAKIVIRIDAE

Isolated 2034 by Dr. Emil Harz and Dr. Carla Greenbaum

- Dwarves become goblins
- Elves become banshees
- Humans become vampires
- Orks become wendigos
- Trolls become dzoo-noo-qua

HMMHV IA: GHILANI VRYKOLAKIVIRIDAE SANGUISUGA

Isolated 2046 by Dr. Wilhelm Bruckner and Dr. Günther Langer

- Humans become nosferatu

HMMHV II: GHILANI MONERIVIRIDAE

Isolated 2039 by Dr. John Russell Jarka and Dr. Michelle Criscione

- Dwarves become gnawers
- Elves become harvesters
- Humans become loup-garous
- Orks become grendels
- Sasquatches become bandersnatchii
- Trolls become fomóraig

HMMHV III: GHILANI WICHTIVIRIDAE

Isolated 2051 by Dr. Jeffrey Krieger

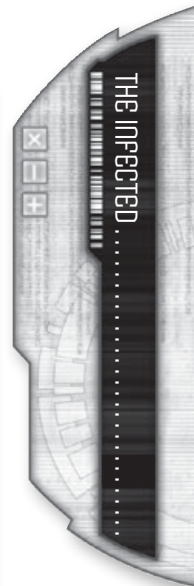
- All metahumans become ghouls

HMMHV I

What is referred to as Human-Metahuman Vampiric Virus is actually a small but rapidly growing family of viruses of the genus Ghilani. The virus most commonly called HMMHV is Ghilani vrykolakiviridae, first isolated at Johns Hopkins University. Nearly forty years have passed, and we don’t know much more about it than Drs. Harz and Greenbaum did.

At first, it was believed that it affected only humans and that all the various forms of the disease were in fact different diseases altogether. This mutability of expression confounded Harz and Greenbaum for the better part of ten years after their initial discovery before they were able to isolate the same RNA sequence in samples from other HMMHV expressions. Another confusing factor at the time was the inconsistency of the RNA expression; humans always expressed as vampires, but on occasion so did elves. It never worked the other way around, though; humans never transformed into banshees, even when Infected by a banshee. It was thought that no other species would express as a vampire, but every now and again the disease throws us a curve ball. I am personally acquainted with a vampire dwarf, for example, so the notion of other metahumans expressing as vampires can’t be ruled out.

The metamorphosis appears to be based solely upon the base metasppecies of the victim, not the infecting creature. The transformations shown in this Aetherpedia ARO are the norm, although the disease frequently does things that we can’t predict. To date,





none of the metavariant subspecies have expressed in a manner inconsistent with their basic stock. This seems to indicate that different expressions depend upon gross metaspecies expression and not on some of the finer distinctions found in the metavariants. In plain English, this means that a minotaur Infected with HMMHV I, for instance, will turn into a dzoo-noo-qua just like your basic garden-variety troll will. At least, he will if he doesn't turn into a vampire minotaur.

Yes, I know. It's a very confusing state of affairs. Welcome to my world. It gets weirder.

Research into the "why" of these different expressions continues, and there is considerable disagreement between different research teams. The wheel of consensus seems to have rolled back to where it was in the beginning, when Harz and Greenbaum were trying to figure things out. That is, there appear to be at least a dozen strains of HMMHV I out there, each strain affecting a single metahuman species, and ne'er the twain shall meet. This notion and those who hold with it clashes sharply with the opinions of the other major group in HMMHV research, which holds that there is only one form of the virus which acts upon all metahuman species. Personally, I tend to fall somewhere in between. Both sides of the argument have convincing points in their favor, but neither one fully accounts for some of the anomalies I mentioned before or those I'll be talking about later.

Despite the variety, all HMMHV I expressions have a number of common characteristics. For instance, all expressions have enhanced perceptive abilities to one degree or another. Some of these increases are simply the sharpening of existing senses, but many expressions gain entirely new senses along the way. Vampires, for instance, gain the ability to see into the infrared spectrum.

The host's nervous system is also rewired to be more efficient in passing signals from the brain to the body. As a result, all expressions of the disease show a measurable increase in reaction speed over their non-Infected counterparts. Most exhibit a significant increase in raw running speed and stamina as well. Some can even magically augment their speed at will, making them terrifyingly quick.

All expressions also show an increase in raw physical strength. For most, this is a magical condition akin to a permanent spell, though for some it simply represents a significant increase in overall muscle mass. No matter the cause, however, such increased strength can make dealing with their prey a much easier task than it might be otherwise; the typical vampire, for instance, can physically take on the typical troll and reasonably expect to hold its own.

The most frightening change to the body as a whole is the ability of all HMMHV I Infected to regenerate physical damage at what can only be described as a phenomenal rate. The virus can reconstruct the genetic template it affixes itself to with incredible speed, restoring the vampire from near-death to complete health in a matter of minutes. Given a little time, it can even restore lost limbs and organs.

One side effect of this regeneration is that you'll never find a cybernetic vampire. The Infected's regenerative abilities don't allow the long hours of surgery required for implanting a cybernetic device. It also rejects any existing cyberware in the host's body, forcing it out in an extremely grotesque and painful fashion.

• Not entirely true. There are surgical techniques the Infected can invest in to get some pieces of cyber installed, but they're hellishly

expensive and it's harder than hell to find a doc who'll do them (assuming they're equipped to do so in the first place). The Infected aren't exactly welcome in most hospitals or clinics, though the medical system in Asamando is a notable exception. Most of their clinics, not surprisingly, are properly equipped.

Regeneration also restricts the cyberware that an Infected patient can receive; their systems are so sensitive that they can tolerate only delta-grade 'ware. This is another reason you'll seldom find a cybered-up vampire but don't assume that they don't exist.

• Hannibelle

While you won't find cybernetic vampires, you will find many who use magic. The virus frequently unlocks previously unknown or untapped magical ability in many of its victims, who also generally keep any such ability they had in life. I speak from personal experience when I say that there are few things more frightening than a vampiric adept at the height of her power.

One physiological change evidenced in some, but not all, expressions is the halting of the aging process and heightened immune responses to poisons and diseases. We don't know why not all expressions of HMMHV display these abilities or what triggers them.

One common weakness that all expressions of HMMHV share is an allergy to sunlight. The body's cells become extremely sensitive to the ultraviolet band of frequencies in natural sunlight. Typically, these frequencies are not found in most artificial light sources. You won't find many vampires or banshees at nightclubs with a lot of black lights in use, however.

HMMHV I is notable among the various Ghilani retroviruses for having multiple expressions for a particular species, in this case humans. What we don't know about the Bruckner-Langer strain could fill entire libraries. What we do know about it is somewhat more limited. It is the most enigmatic form of an already enigmatic disease. It is also, fortunately for the world, exceptionally rare, affecting perhaps one in 10,000 of the Infected by most estimates.

It is essentially a more potent version of the basic retrovirus, and it creates the "super-vampires" commonly referred to as nosferatu. All known nosferatu have been powerful magicians, so it can be inferred that victims must either already be Awakened before their transformation or that Bruckner-Langer automatically Awakens its victims as a part of their transformation. Considering their power, neither option is particularly appealing.

It is widely believed that Bruckner-Langer is lethal to all non-human metaspecies. Given the rarity of this particular strain of the virus, however, and the persistent rumors of non-human BL victims, the possibility of this strain expressing in another metahuman species cannot be ruled out.

• Is he actually suggesting that there might be super-banshees or super-wendigos out there?
• Sticks

• It might have already happened. There have been stories of Infected trolls living in London's sewers for more than a decade, though reports varied as to what they might have been. For a while, mutaqua were simply thought to be trolls mutated by the chemical cocktail found in those sewers. Someone later suggested that they might be fomóraig. Another someone said they ran into bleached-



Aetherpedia Entry: Vampiric Pawns

Also called "Ivors" or "Renfields," depending upon local vernacular. A term used to describe a metahuman addicted to an alchemical compound derived from the blood of HMMVV I-Infected individuals. Primarily created by vampires and nosferatu, this drug (referred to on the street as "Renfield") can be produced by any HMMVV I expression with the proper equipment and ritual knowledge. It is reportedly becoming more popular amongst wendigos.

While popular culture portrays vampiric pawns as deformed and pitiable manservants, the truth is that they are all but indistinguishable from other metahumans. They are used to perform services that the creating vampire cannot and to act as intermediaries for the vampire.

white dzoo-noo-qua who burst into flame with a light spell. There have been scattered sightings since then, but recently someone I know came back with a piece of one of these things big enough to be analyzed. While there's nothing positively confirmed that I've seen, preliminary reports from that analysis show that it had HMMVV Ia in its genome.

• Stone

• I wonder what our dear friend Martin de Vries would have to say about this. Anybody know what's happened to old Marty? It's been quite a while since his last book tour.

• Hannibelle

We are talking about vampires here, so it's probably about time I talked about vampirism. By "vampirism," by the way, I don't mean sucking someone's blood in some near-orgasmic trance. No, I mean draining the life out of a person, sapping their aura bit by bit until the person's soul gives up on the body and leaves it as a lifeless husk in a monster's arms.

They don't all drink blood, incidentally. Certainly, vampires do, and in fact they can't ingest anything else, nor can banshees. Wendigos, dzoo-noo-qua, and goblins all dine on the raw flesh of their victims. But no matter what they eat as part of their diet, they don't really live on the food; that is only a token of what keeps them alive. They exist from one night to another by draining away the life energy of their victims.

You and I, all living things, have a certain amount of energy in our auras, and this energy stays more or less constant throughout our lives. It can be dimmed when we install cyberware, for instance, but once the damage is done, the level remains constant from that point. Vampires and their kind, though, face a constantly ebbing tide. Viewed in the astral plane, their astral form is unstable, disrupted by the virus. It grows stronger when they feed, and it fades away as they go through their nightly rituals. But it does fade away.

To live as a vampire is to constantly die.

• He lays it on a little thick, but his sister was turned into a vampire about fifteen years ago and he's been studying the disease ever

since, trying to find a cure. I'm inclined to cut him a little slack.

• Hannibelle

So they feed on those more fortunate than they are. Sometimes they find volunteers, though more often they hunt down innocent victims. They steal life itself from them, sometimes in small amounts and sometimes all at once. There are limits, of course, that we all have. The energy they drain from their victims is gone forever, never to be replaced. Our bodies might heal, but our auras do not. They are finite. Even a willing victim undergoes permanent and irreparable harm every time they submit.

The actual act of stealing the victim's life force varies from individual to individual, but in all cases it involves an intense emotional response to some stimulus provided by the creature. Usually, this emotion is fear, but it can also be hatred or anger or even passion and love. Whatever the emotion, however, it has to be personal to both predator and prey. That emotion creates a psychic bond and aligns the auras of the two individuals involved. Once so aligned, the Infected can begin to draw the life energy from his victim.

Some have called this draining the greatest ecstasy they have ever known; others have called it the most intense agony they have ever known. This is usually dependent upon how the emotional connection was made in the first place. It's one thing to have your life stolen by force at the rending claws of a goblin, and quite another to have it stolen away while making love to a beautiful monster that might once have been your wife.

The infection can be passed in a number of ways. There is often a sufficient concentration of the virus in the saliva of a vampire, but it's usually tainted blood or flesh that infects the victim. In some cases, the victim is given the blood or flesh as part of some ritual; other times, in their sheer terror, they bite their attacker and doom themselves. There is at least one documented case of the virus passing from host to victim during sexual intercourse. In any case, the passing of the virus is usually a deliberate act. It is the vampiric means of procreation and seldom carried out randomly.

HMMVV I can express and begin its work only once the victim has been drained of energy. Once drained, the body goes into a coma and appears to be dead. During this coma-like state, the virus is busily recoding the body's DNA in its own image. This usually takes about 24 hours, at which point metabolic processes resume and the victim rises again.

• If it's spread so many ways, why aren't we neck-deep in dzoo-noo-qua and wendigos?

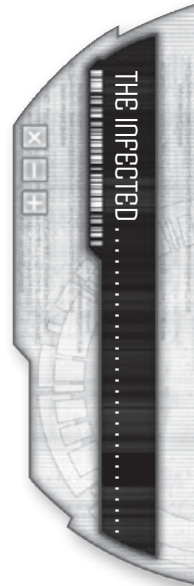
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• There are several forces at work in the transformation. Many victims, for instance, don't die from having their life drained away; they die of shock or blood loss first. The virus doesn't activate just because you flatline; you have to flatline by being drained. Many of the Infected make an "ethical" choice to kill their victims before draining away that last bit of their aura specifically to keep from spawning another victim of Infection.

• Ethernaut

HMMVV II

HMMVV I is an exceptionally rare disease; it takes considerable effort to pass it along to someone. On the other hand,





INCOMING FEED.....

HMHVV II, or Ghilani moneriviridae, is substantially more common as well as much more easily communicable.

It was once referred to as the Jarka-Criscione strain because for a long time there were only two known metahuman expressions of the disease: trolls with Jarka's Syndrome, known as fomóraig, and humans with Criscione's Syndrome, known as loup-garou. This usage has largely gone out of style over the last couple of years.

HMHVV II is unique in that it can infect a non-metahuman species. Sasquatches with HMHVV II are called bandersnatchii, and for nearly two decades they were the only other known expression of HMHVV II.

However, in 2069 a new expression of HMHVV II called the harvester was discovered down in Houston. It had been an elf before becoming Infected. Grendels, which are orks with HMHVV II, were first discovered in Pittsburgh in the spring of 2070. Ferocious as they look, they're actually quite docile unless you directly threaten them. Finally, in the summer of 2071, the gnawer was discovered in the Cabrini Green district in Chicago. No one knows, or seems willing to say, how long these Infected dwarfs have been coexisting with the ghoul population there.

This form of the disease is much more easily spread than vrykolakiviridae. The latter requires a deliberate infection of the victim and the consumption of the victim's life energy. HMHVV II, on the other hand, does not require the victim's aura to be drained, and it can be spread with a simple bite or scratch.

HMHVV II starts working its way into the victim's genetic code almost immediately upon infection. This, of course, makes dealing with moneriviridae even worse than vrykolakiviridae in

many ways. The initial rewriting of the victim's genetic code and the initial metamorphosis takes place relatively quickly, in about 24 hours, with the victim mercifully comatose. The physical transformation, though, is not complete upon the victim's awakening. It continues with the victim fully conscious and aware as its body is changed.

How long the complete metamorphosis takes varies considerably; a sasquatch takes approximately ten days to fully become a bandersnatch, while a human can take nearly three weeks to become a loup-garou. The average seems to be about fourteen days. The process is also agonizingly painful. Many believe that it is this prolonged agony, which no analgesic or anesthetic seems able to treat, which results in the shattered intellects and feral behavior so common to victims of HMHVV II.

- There is some debate over this. While it's true that almost every expression of HMHVV II is feral at best, it's not clear whether it's the pain that drives them mad or if it's something inherent in the virus itself. Given that gnawers aren't feral death machines in spite of the same kind of metamorphosis, there might be something a little larger at work.

- Nephrine

Like HMHVV I victims, HMHVV II victims are sterile, with one glaring exception. That exception is bandersnatchii, and they breed like horny college students. It's only their horrendous parenting skills that save us from being overrun by the things. Few infant bandersnatchii live to adolescence, let alone adulthood.

**METAMORPHOSIS
LENGTHS (AVERAGE)**

Bandersnatch	11 days
Fomôraig	15 days
Gnawer	14 days
Grendel	18 days
Harvester	26 days
Loup-garou	22 days

HMMHV III

Ghouls began appearing in 2011, just like elves and dwarfs but in far smaller numbers. First appearing in Sub-Saharan Africa, little was known about them, and with the general chaos breaking loose that year, nobody bothered to learn any more for quite some time. That all changed, of course, in 2021 when the first wave of goblinization hit ... and ghouls began appearing by the hundreds in city after city across the entire globe. We know now that the same ebb in mana that triggered goblinization activated the latent RNA of the Ghilani wictiviridae retrovirus in the genes of all those poor unfortunates fifty years ago.

It looked like a form of goblinization. Imagine the shock felt in 2051 when HMMHV involvement was discovered. One of the first scientific teams to study the ghoulish phenomenon, Drs. Jeffrey and Samantha Krieger began their work in 2022. They suspected the possibility of contagion, of course, but most of the evidence pointed away from it, and Harz and Greenbaum hadn't even begun the research that would identify HMMHV. Figuring it all out ... well, it took a little while.

HMMHV III is the most virulent form of the virus, and it can be spread with a bite, a scratch, even a mere touch if you're unlucky enough to have an open wound. To date, the virus is not known to be spread aerobically, but with a disease as pernicious as this one can be, it's hard to rule out the possibility that it could happen.

- I feel so much better now.
- Riser

The virus exists in the ghoul's saliva and other bodily fluids; given the typical sanitary conditions most ghouls live in, they're walking biohazards. The Kriegers would learn this fact the hard way, as they both fell victim to the disease that would bear their names, Samantha in 2049 and Jeff three years later. They continued their search for a cure for Krieger's Syndrome until their deaths. They weren't successful, I'm sorry to say. HMMHV III is almost completely resistant to healing magic, and it barely slows down for antiviral drugs and other medical treatments, making infection an almost certain condemnation to becoming a ghoul.

This form of the virus has a number of slight differences from both the vrykolakiviridae and moneriviridae subgenera, but they're very minor. One major difference is that, unlike its cousins, it doesn't express differently in different metasppecies. A human Infected with Krieger's Syndrome becomes a ghoul, just like a troll Infected with it becomes a ghoul.

Like victims of HMMHV II, the victims of HMMHV III are transformed without having to be drained of their life energy first. Like those of its cousins, the ghoul transformation is a slow one, taking nearly two weeks to complete, none of which is spent in a comatose state. Like the transformations associated with HMMHV II infection, the ghoul transformation is accompanied by agonizing pain; while debate lingers about whether this pain causes the mental degradation all too common to ghouls, it's certain that it can't help.

NEW EXPRESSIONS

Popular literature is rife with tales of most of the Infected. Vampires and banshees, for instance, have been with us since the Awakening in 2011, with stories about similar creatures going back centuries. Most of the expressions of the various forms of HMMHV are well-known, having been featured in any number of trid specials and field guides. Some of the Infected I've discussed today, though, are fairly new phenomena that deserve a bit of an introduction.

HARVESTER

These horrors began to appear only in late 2069. Postmortem examination showed them to be elves Infected with Ghilani moneriviridae. Initially encountered in Houston, Texas, documented sightings have been recorded in several cities across North America since then.

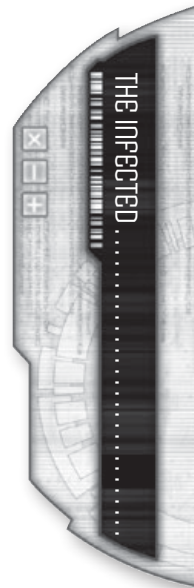
The primary changes wrought by the virus in this case are the muscular appearance, a toughening of the hide, and the scythe-like talons from which it derives its name. They're carnivorous and cannibalistic, though they don't appear to require metahuman flesh to survive; they just seem to like it. They're about as dumb as a box of hammers. They're also solitary territorial hunters, ferocious in combat and afraid of nothing.

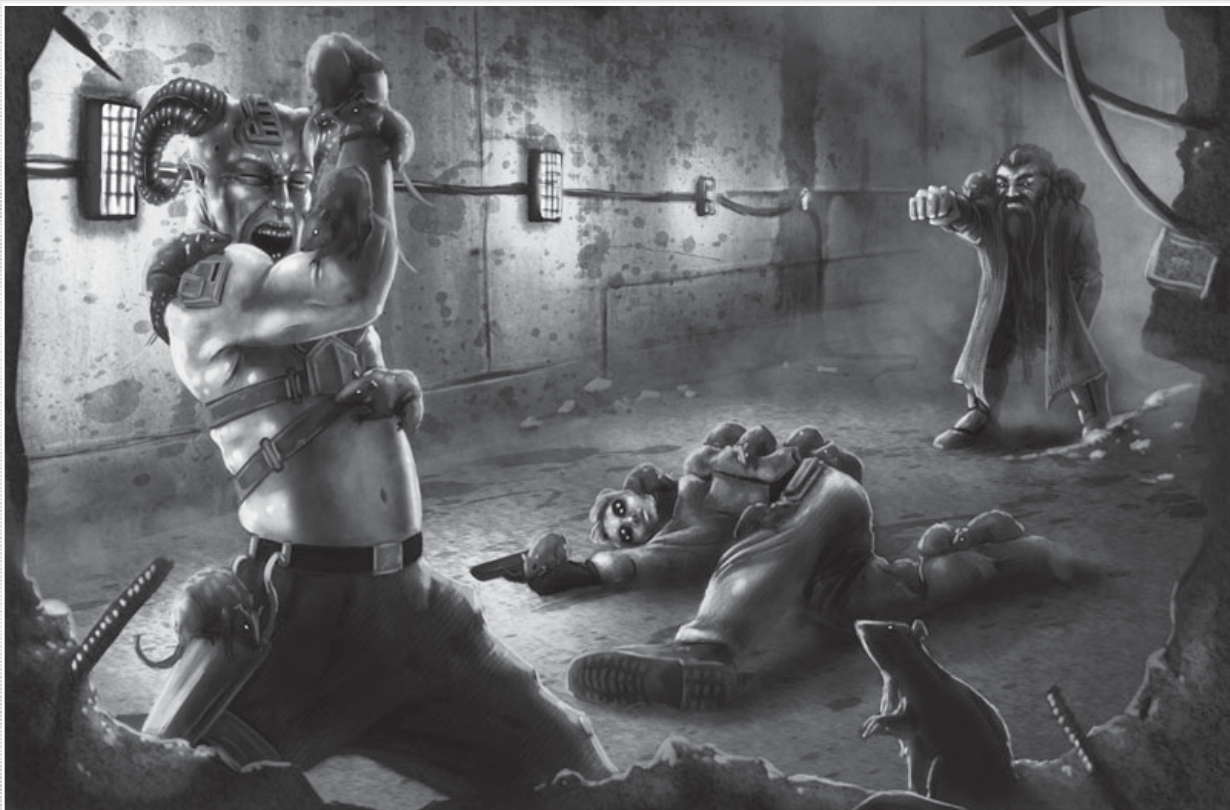
- So that's what that was.

I was on my way back from a job in Houston a few weeks ago and made a wrong turn downtown. Yeah, I know, that tends to be fatal, but I can hold my own. Anyway, I walk into this alley and find one of these things crouched over what turns out to be a woman's body. It caught sight of me and started snarling and growling; the good doctor appears to be right about their territorial instincts. I took a step to see if there was anything to be done for its dinner, and it charged me. I've been doing this for a while, and I've seldom seen anything that wasn't wired move so fast. Seeing that double-handful of extremely sharp claws coming at me at that speed did nothing to make me any happier about the situation.

Fortunately, I'm pretty fast myself; I managed to dodge out of its way and then empty my pistol into the thing. It kept coming at me until it fell over from blood loss. I called the law to report the body and then high-tailed it out of there.

- Stone
- The good doctor forgot to mention the teeth. Lots and lots and lots of sharp, pointy teeth.
- Butch





INCOMING FEED.....

GRENDEL

This is what you get when you infect an ork with moneriviridae. The ork's already profuse body hair becomes a matted pelt, and their tusks become more pronounced. Most strikingly, though, their arms are noticeably elongated. Like the sasobonsam ghouls of Asamando, grendels can move with remarkable speed on all fours.

Grendels are nocturnal scavengers. They exist for the most part on carrion, though they'll eat anything even remotely edible and aren't above eating metahuman flesh. They typically make their lairs in underground locales far from the light of day, such as sewers and abandoned subway tunnels. They're usually encountered alone, occasionally in mated pairs. It's also not uncommon for them to be surrounded in their lairs by a variety of subterranean vermin such as rats, devil rats, and other similar creatures.

- Out of idle curiosity, why can't we ever discover critters that are cute and fluffy?
- /dev/grrl
- Oh, I don't know. These are furry, travel on all fours, and they keep pets. Doesn't that score any points with you?
- Pistons
- They're not cute. And do swarms of devil rats really count as pets?
- /dev/grrl

GNAWER

As it was with HMMHV I, the dwarf expression of HMMHV II was the last one to be discovered in metahumanity. And as it does with goblins, it goes out of its way to be contrary with gnawers. Goblins typically exhibit the feral nature common to

moneriviridae infections, while other vrykolakiviridae expressions maintain at least a modicum of intelligence. Gnawers reverse that trend. Every other expression of HMMHV II is typically feral and none too intelligent, but a gnawer is at least as intelligent as it was before contracting the disease.

While intelligent, most gnawers are poorly socialized at best. Many border on sociopathic behavior, likely driven by their somewhat grotesque dietary requirement of eating metahuman bones. Nevertheless, they are social creatures, after a fashion, and are seldom encountered alone.

- Gnawers and ghouls have become very tight in the short time since gnawers were discovered. Quite a few have been seen lately in Ghoultown in Chicago, for instance, and there are rumors about a colony that appears to have sprung up in Asamando. Their diets and their conditions aren't that dissimilar, so I guess it really shouldn't be a big surprise that this is taking place. If you're both shunned for something beyond your control, sometimes it's not a bad idea to band together.
- Hannibelle

ANOMALIES AND OTHER WEIRDNESS

Remember when I said earlier that it gets weirder? Well, here we go.

The first thing we should consider is the sheer variety of vampires out there. There are at least four different vampire subtypes out there, not counting the nosferatu, and possibly more. The abat and the amanalahig are variants of the vampire found in the Philippines, while the penanggalan hails from Southeast Asia. Closer to home, the Caribbean League is home to the sukuyan.

INFECTED-FRIENDLY NATIONS

Amazonia
Asamando
Aztlan
California Free State
Czech Republic
Euskal Herria
France
Philippines
Salish-Shidhe Council
Yakut

To date, no other Infected type shows this sort of wild variety with the exception of ghouls, of which at least three subtypes exist. The sasabonsam hail from Africa and even have their own nation, Asamando. The Japanese archipelago gives us the gaki, and the Philippines have the busaw.

It's worth mentioning again that none of the other Infected have multiple varieties. It's also worth mentioning that no one has any idea whatsoever why this happens or what triggers the differences in these subtypes; it could be either specific genetic markers or certain cultural traits in the victim's psyche. Don't laugh; it is a magically active virus, after all, and the occurrences of the subtypes do appear to be geographically related. Of course, these variations could be the result of specific sub-strains of the disease. It could be a mix of all of the above or something we haven't even considered yet. Research into this, as into most facets of HMMHV, is ongoing.

Another thing that drives researchers in this field mad is that the disease sometimes misbehaves. Time was, if you contracted HMMHV, you either lived or you died. A lucky few managed to fight off the infection, but for the most part, you either turned into a vampire or the virus killed you. It appears that it's not that simple any more.

These days, you might find yourself a carrier, with the disease sitting dormant in your bloodstream waiting for you to pass it on to someone ... or for something to set it off. It might decide to express if you pass through a particularly mana-rich (or mana-poor) area, scorching your aura away in the process.

There are other possible mutations of the virus as well, some of which might be manmade. So far, the virus itself seems to attack only sapient beings that are mammals. We know that the five metahuman species and sasquatches are vulnerable; we don't know what the chances are of that list expanding. There is already concern over genetics research using HMMHV as a vector for DNA modification, and there are famous stories about secret cabals seeking to "improve" the virus for their own fiendish purposes.

What this might mean, however, is that varieties of the virus that infect other sapient or potentially sapient species, such as centaurs, chimpanzees, troglodytes, or dours, might exist—either deliberately or accidentally. There haven't been any reports of any of these species being Infected, but I'm afraid it wouldn't surprise me in the least for it to happen. Another thing that worries me about all this monkeying around with the Ghilani retroviruses is the notion that they might jump species into reptilian or ichthyoidal forms of intelligence. The prospect of vampiric merrow or naga does nothing to help me sleep at night.

• Speaking of weirdness, the Infected population in DeeCee has been dwindling for a while now. Necks snapped, throats torn out ... and not a drop of blood in any of them. The remaining Infected are all just a tad nervous, as you might imagine, and whispers on the street are saying that some new kind of vampire that has to feed on the blood and auras of the Infected themselves is roaming the city and clearing them out one by one.

• Kay St. Irregular

• Okay, somebody stop the world and let me off.

• Slamm-O!

And finally, there are the critters. Two "Infected" creatures in particular are worth noting. The chupacabras, found mostly in the Caribbean League, carries the HMMHV virus and feeds on blood and stolen life energy from its victims. It's also clearly man-made, as recent research has shown us. Chimeric splicing of the genetic material of a mandrill, a green iguana, and our old friend Ghilani vrykolakiviridae has been noted in recent studies of the creature's genome. Why someone would create a creature such as the chupacabras is a mystery for someone else to solve, however.

My personal favorite is the Australian drop bear. Awakened koalas with really rotten tempers and a taste for raw meat, these beasts have long had the reputation of being vampiric. Some old research even suggested that it carried the moneriviridae virus in its genetic structure. More recent studies have shown us that this is quite incorrect. They are not Infected koalas. They are, however, carriers of multiple strains of HMMHV II. Nearly every drop bear ever studied has had at least one strain floating around in its bloodstream, and more than a few have had every known strain. There have been a few reported cases of them infecting their surviving victims, but they aren't considered a major risk for HMMHV. At least, not at the moment.

Considering that most of the Infected are solitary hunters, it's somewhat surprising that they have any sort of a culture at all. They do, though, and it's attracting attention.

There are 35 countries in the world that recognize the Infected as something other than wild animals which need to be controlled. Ours is not one of those countries, and neither is the UCAS. Both still carry laws on the books establishing bounties for the Infected, though those laws are seldom enforced these days. Many Infected are eligible to acquire criminal SINS and live as second-class citizens, at the expense of being monitored 24 hours a day. Ghouls have made enormous headway in the UCAS in search of their civil rights, but technically they could still be killed for the bounty. This is beginning to change, as some groundbreaking legislation has been introduced in the UCAS Senate to strike down the bounties on ghouls and loup-garou and offer them a path to citizenship. Similar legislation is expected in the CAS sometime this year.

The African nation of Asamando is a nation of ghouls, and while very few non-ghoul Infected live there, all Infected are recognized as sapient beings. Asamando is rich in natural resources, and it has lucrative contracts with the likes of Horizon, Saeder-Krupp, and DeBeers-Omnitech. Each of these corps has agreed to recognize Asamando as a legitimate nation, as has the Corporate Court; this is not lost on the UN, which is still shuffling its feet before offering them its recognition.

INFECTED-FRIENDLY CORPS

Aztechnology
Cavalier Arms
DeBeers-Omnitech
Draco Foundation
Evo
Saeder-Krupp
Wuxing
ZetalmpChem

Most megacorps officially ignore the Infected, but some allow them full corporate citizenship. Others, such as Aztechnology, allegedly use them as covert operatives. With the Corporate Court recognizing Asamando, though, it's thought that the attitudes of several of the corps will change in due course.

- Aztechnology employing the Infected is hardly a surprise. What is a surprise is that they're covert about it. If there's anything they know, it's PR, and with Infected rights being a rising cause célèbre, it might help their image a bit. Of course, it could also do just the opposite, but considering how tarnished they are at the moment, one would think they'd try to clean it up a little.

- Hannibelle

As I noted earlier, most of the Infected are solitary hunters and guard their hunting grounds jealously. That said, some of them are better than others at social interaction. Ghouls, for instance, are noted for their communities in a number of major cities in both the CAS and the UCAS. We've already noted Asamando. Other Infected who buck the skulking loner trend are some of the HMMHV II species, specifically the loup-garou and the grendels. Both form tightly knit packs, though neither is known to create communities of their own the way ghouls have.

Also of interest are the non-Infected hangers-on who try to emulate the Infected. Vampires in particular seem to spawn these strange cliques. Some of them become willing pawns for the vampires, while others are just junkies and weak-willed losers seeking to elevate their own station in life by being seen with the monster they choose to follow. Some offer themselves as willing blood donors, and some even allow the vampire to tap into their auras and truly feed. A few of these benighted fools actually seek to become Infected themselves, willing to condemn themselves in the name of "immortal beauty."

GAME INFORMATION

BANDERSNATCH

A sasquatch Infected with HMMHV II, a bandersnatch has a pelt which is thicker and shabbier than it was pre-Infection. Its canine teeth become more pronounced and its arms somewhat elongated, giving the bandersnatch a more animalistic appearance than a sasquatch. The bandersnatch's fur helps it refract light around its body, so its true form is rarely seen. When using this power, the bandersnatch appears as a shifting, humanoid-shaped image of the surrounding terrain.

Natural Habitat: Mountainous and evergreen regions in the northern reaches of both North America and Asia.

BOUNTIES ON INFECTED (IN NUYEN)

CAS

Bandersnatchii	5,000
Banshees	5,000
Dzoo-noo-qua	3,000
Fomôraig	1,500
Ghouls	1,500
Goblins	4,000
Loup-garou	3,500
Nosferatu	15,000
Vampires	6,000
Wendigos	15,000

UCAS

Bandersnatchii	7,500
Banshees	5,000
Dzoo-noo-qua	2,500
Fomôraig	1,500
Ghouls	1,500
Goblins	4,000
Loup-garou	2,500
Nosferatu	15,000
Vampires	7,500
Wendigos	15,000

B A R S C I L W E D G E S S M Init IP
8 3 3 7 1 4 2 4 3 5 3 7 1

Movement: 15/35

Skills: Animal Calls (Trade Knowledge) 5, Assensing 3, Athletics skill group 2, Infiltration 4, Perception 4, Shadowing 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Dual Natured, Mimicry, Natural Weapon (Bite/Claw: (Str ÷ 2) + 1P, AP 0), Sapience

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Sasquatch Flesh)

Notes: Bandersnatchii have +1 Reach. Some bandersnatchii may have the Adept, Magician, or Mystic Adept qualities.

BANSHEE

A banshee is an elf Infected with HMMHV I. Like other Infected, they prey on sapient beings. Solitary and reclusive hunters, banshees prefer to lair in desolate places near human habitation. They stalk their prey, which they terrify into flight with their haunting wail and pursue until the victim drops from exhaustion. The banshee then closes in for the kill, completely draining its prey of blood and life essence.

Transformation into a banshee is barely noticeable to many observers. In outward appearance, a banshee resembles a gaunt elf with very pale skin. As time passes, a banshee's natural skin and hair color tend to fade, and their epidermis becomes slightly translucent, with veins easily visible on the skin's surface.

Banshees are hemovores, subsisting solely on the blood of their victims. Like vampires, they cannot hold down normal food, and alcohol induces nausea (see Nausea, p. 254, SR44).

Natural Habitat: Inhabited areas worldwide.



B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	4	3	3	5	4	3	4	3	2D6-1	3	7	2

Movement: 10/25**Skills:** Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 4, Unarmed Combat 3**Powers:** Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell), Essence Drain, Fear, Immunity (Age, Pathogens, Toxins), Infection, Mist Form, Natural Weapon (Bite: (Str÷2) + 1P, AP 0, -1 Reach), Regeneration, Sapience**Weaknesses:** Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Blood), Essence Loss, Vulnerability (Silver), Vulnerability (Wood)**Notes:** Some banshees may have the Adept, Magician, or Mystic Adept qualities.

CHUPACABRAS

The chupacabras is a reptilian biped standing approximately 1.2 meters in height. Appearing to be a cross between an iguana and a monkey, it is covered in both green scales and dark, coarse hair. It possesses an iguana's spiky head crest, large red eyes, a short tail, and opposable thumbs. This elusive creature feeds on blood, preferring goats and cattle (though it has also been known to attack metahumans on occasion).

The chupacabras is believed by many to be an engineered creature because its genome has both reptilian and mammalian traits. Genetic testing also shows a variant of HMMVV integrated into the genome, though the creatures are not able to infect victims with that disease.

Natural Habitat: Tropical forests in the Caribbean.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
5	3	4	3	1	5	3	6	2	2D6	4	9	1

Movement: 10/20**Skills:** Climbing 3, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 3**Powers:** Concealment (Self Only), Essence Drain, Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV (Str÷2)P, AP -1, -1 Reach), Paralyzing Touch**Weaknesses:** Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Dietary Requirement (Blood), Essence Loss, Vulnerability (Fire)

DROP BEAR

An Awakened version of the koala, the drop bear is distinguished from its mundane cousin by its jet-black fur and razor-sharp teeth and claws. They are omnivorous, eating eucalyptus like ordinary koalas but also the flesh of animals. They don't hunt their prey, but they wait for it to come to them. Once a suitable victim appears underneath the branches of the tree the drop bear inhabits, it drops down and attacks with its claws.

Testing has shown that the drop bear carries HMMVV II, though it is not Infected. Worse, however, is the increasing number of cases in which surviving victims have contracted the disease.

Natural Habitat: Forested areas of Australia.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
3	3	3	5	1	4	2	5	2	6	7	1

Movement: 8/20**Qualities:** Carrier (HMMVV II)**Skills:** Climbing 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 3, Unarmed Combat 2



Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins), Natural Weapons (Claw/Bite: DV (Str÷2)P, AP -1, -1 Reach)
Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Eucalyptus)

DZOO-NOO-QUA

A troll Infected with HMMHV I, the dzoo-noo-qua is a grotesque and frightening figure. The disease causes the troll's dermal deposits to become grossly irregular, spiky, and nodular. Muscle mass is also increased, and skin color typically fades, though it's not certain whether this is a condition brought on by the disease or by the dzoo-noo-qua's nocturnal habits. Transformation from troll to dzoo-noo-qua is usually extremely traumatic; this often, but not always, radically diminishes intellectual capacities.

Natural Habitat: Inhabited areas worldwide, often in sewers or abandoned buildings.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
9	2	5	8	1	3	2	4	3	2D6-1	3	8	2

Movement: 15/35

Skills: Athletics skill group 2, Counterspelling 3, Intimidation 3, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Armor (4/4), Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Essence Drain, Infection, Magical Guard (self only), Natural Weapon (Bite/Claw: DV (Str÷2) + 2P, AP 0), Regeneration, Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Flesh), Essence Loss

Notes: Dzoo-noo-qua have +1 Reach. Some dzoo-noo-qua may have the Adept, Magician, or Mystic Adept qualities.

FOMÓRAIG

The fomóraig is a troll Infected with HMMHV II. Changes include enlarged limbs and increased dermal bone formation. Much of the latter takes the form of bony "chestnuts" surrounded by acid-secreting glands. Nails on both hands and feet harden into claws. Fomóraig also have rudimentary gills on the neck and a shaggy mane of dark brown or black hair. Primarily nocturnal, fomóraig will hunt anytime if sufficiently hungry. As with other Infected, a fomóraig's level of intelligence can vary from barely above bestial to intellectual brilliance.

Natural Habitat: Marshes and woodlands, primarily in Tír na nÓg.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
10	2	4	10	1	3	2	4	3	5	3	7	1

Movement: 15/35

Skills: Athletics skill group 2, Counterspelling 3, Intimidation 3, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Armor (3/3), Corrosive Secretions, Magical Guard (Self Only), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: (Str ÷ 2) + 1P, AP 0), Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Air Pollution, Moderate), Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Flesh). Cooked meat makes them sick and causes nausea (p. 254, SR4A).

Notes: Fomóraig have +1 Reach. Some fomóraig may have the Adept, Magician, or Mystic Adept qualities.

CARRIER

Bonus: 5 BP

The character is HMMHV-positive but not Infected, or the character is Infected but carrying multiple strains. Her bodily fluids carry a virus that she cannot express—such as a human carrying the retrovirus that creates fomóraig—which the character can pass on to others. Only an Infected with the Infection power can become a carrier for a retrovirus that is spread only via the Infection power. Any Infected the character creates becomes a carrier for all species of HMMHV for which the character is a carrier. The character receives a -2 negative dice pool modifier to all Social Tests against other metahumans and sasquatches that know she is HMMHV-positive.

This quality may be taken more than once, each for a different strain. The dice pool modifier is cumulative. A character cannot carry the strains for both vampires and nosferatu.

GNAWER

The gnawer is a dwarf with HMMHV II. It resembles a mobile statue of a normal dwarf; its skin is a rough, gray, stone-like surface. This bony layer offers it some natural armor. Their condition tends to isolate them, causing them to live on the outskirts of human society. Their dietary requirement frequently causes them to form partnerships of convenience with organleggers and ghouls communities to share resources.

Gnawers will tend to form small communities of their own, often side-by-side with ghouls. With their similar diseases and complementary diets, the two interact well together.

Natural Habitat: Inhabited areas worldwide.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
5	3	4	6	3	5	3	5	3	5	9	1

Movement: 8/20

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (1/1), Immunity (Toxins), Noxious Breath, Paralyzing Touch, Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Bone)

GOBLIN

Goblins are HMMHV I-Infected dwarfs. The virus wreaks tremendous change in the victim, including the loss of all body hair and fat. This makes the goblin a skeletal figure, its skin stretched taut over its wiry muscles. Goblin ears are large, long, and slightly pointed. A goblin's favorite food is raw meat. Goblins often possess a sickeningly sweet body odor which develops with time.

As with many of the other Infected, the trauma of becoming a goblin frequently induces severe intellectual degradation. This is not universal, however, and goblins run the intellectual gamut from feral monster to calculating genius.

Natural Habitat: Inhabited areas worldwide, usually underground or in abandoned buildings.



B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
5 3 4 6 1 4 1 5 3 2D6-1 3 8 2

Movement: 8/20

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell, Taste), Essence Drain, Immunity (Fire), Infection, Natural Weapon (Claws: DV (Str÷2) + 1P, AP 0), Regeneration, Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Flesh), Essence Loss, Vulnerability (Iron). Goblins cannot digest heavily processed foods, and they suffer nausea (p. 254, *SR4A*) when they eat them.

Notes: Some goblins may have the Adept, Magician, or Mystic Adept qualities.

GRENDEL

The grendel is an ork Infected with HMHV II. It is typically a quiet, though brutal-looking, beast. Usually scavengers, they will hunt if necessary. While the disease has rendered the creature virtually non-sapient, the grendel does display great cunning when necessary. They set simple traps to protect their lairs, for instance. They can also send small swarms of vermin to attack those creatures or characters it sees as a threat, allowing the smaller creatures to soften up its foe before engaging battle itself.

Natural Habitat: Tunnels in most inhabited areas worldwide.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS Init IP
8 4 4 8 1 4 1 4 1 5 8 1

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Climbing 2, Perception 4, Shadowing 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Animal Control (Subterranean Critters), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Smell, Thermographic Vision), Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

Notes: Charisma score for its Animal Control power is 4. Grendels have +1 Reach.

HARVESTER

The result of HMHV II in elves, the harvester appears as a heavy-set elf with hands ending in long blade-like claws that are similar to cyberspurs, which it can use with devastating effect. Their mouths are terrifying maws filled with razor-sharp teeth. Harvesters are carnivorous hunters and very protective of their territory. If challenged, these creatures will attempt to scare off an intruder for one or two rounds and then attack with total savage fury. It almost always fights to the death. Its exceptional speed in combat often takes opponents by surprise.

Natural Habitat: Inhabited areas worldwide.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
5 3 6 6 1 5 1 4 2 5 2 11 2

Movement: 15/35

Skills: Athletics skill group 3, Intimidation 2, Perception 4, Shadowing 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Armor (1/1), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light and Thermographic Vision), Movement (self only), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV (Str÷2) + 1P, AP 0), Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Silver, Moderate), Allergy (Sunlight, Mild).

LOUP-GAROU

The loup-garou is a human Infected with HMHV II. After the virus has run its course, the host is considerably changed. His body is covered in short, gray-black fur. The lips are drawn back, revealing sharper teeth with pronounced canines. The fingernails lengthen and harden into claws. Transformation into a loup-garou is particularly brutal; the trauma often but not always causes significant reduction in intellectual ability. It lives as a scavenger most of the time, save for a peak period of four to six days out of every twenty-eight when it becomes a ravaging monster, attacking and killing any creature it can.

Natural Habitat: Inhabited areas worldwide.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
4 3 3 7 1 4 2 4 2 5 3 7 1

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assessing 3, Athletics skill group 2, Perception 4, Shadowing 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Natural Weapon (Claw/Bite: DV (Str÷2) + 1P, AP 0), Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Aconite, Moderate), Allergy (Horseradish, Moderate), Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Flesh)

Notes: During the 4–6 day peak of its 28-day cycle, a loup-garou will become savage and go berserk as a Bear shaman (p. 200, *SR4A*) that fights as if it had a rating 2 adrenaline pump (p. 345, *SR4A*).

MUTAQUA

Whether victims of the natural progression of viral mutation or ghastly genetic experimentation, mutaqua are trolls successfully Infected with the Bruckner-Langer strain of HMHV I. Like their lesser cousins, the dzoo-noo-qua, mutaqua are grotesquely deformed, with stark white skin over their asymmetrical dermal bone deposits.

Natural Habitat: Tunnels systems, usually in the British Isles.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
9 3 5 10 1 4 2 5 3 2D6+3 4 9 2

Movement: 15/35

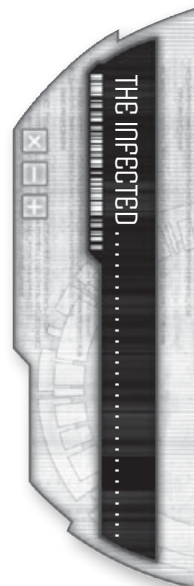
Qualities: Adept

Skills: Assessing 3, Athletics skill group 2, Counterspelling 4, Infiltration 4, Intimidation 3, Perception 4, Shadowing 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (4/4), Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Essence Drain, Fear, Infection, Magical Guard (Self Only), Natural Weapon (Bite/Claw: (Str÷2) + 2P, AP 0), Regeneration, Sapience. In addition, the maximum Essence that a mutaqua can obtain at a time through Essence Drain is equal to 18.

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Severe), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Flesh), Essence Loss (every 2 months).

Notes: Mutaqua have +1 Reach. Gamemasters should assign additional Adept Powers to a mutaqua.



NOSFERATU

Nosferatu are humans Infected with the extremely rare Bruckner-Langer strain of HMMHV I. Like vampires, they consume blood to live, but unlike vampires, they can eat other food if they so desire. Also unlike vampires, they have a harder time blending in with humanity. They lose all of their body and facial hair, their incisors and canines grow sharper and much more pronounced, and their skin becomes very pale. They also appear emaciated and gaunt.

They are all but exclusively nocturnal. They are highly intelligent, cunning, and patient. Nosferatu are generally able to outthink and outwait their enemies.

Natural Habitat: Inhabited areas worldwide.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	3	2D6+5	4	9	2

Movement: 10/25

Qualities: Magician

Skills: Conjuring skill group 3, Infiltration 3, Influence skill group 3, Perception 4, Shadowing 4, Sorcery skill group 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Compulsion, Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Essence Drain, Fear, Immunity (Age, Pathogens, Toxins), Infection, Influence, Natural Weapon (Bite: (Str÷2) + 1P, AP 0, -1 Reach), Regeneration, Sapience. In addition, the maximum Essence that a nosferatu can drain is equal to three times its natural maximum Essence.

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Severe), Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Blood), Essence Loss (every 6 months).

HMMHV I (GHILANI VRYKOLAKIVIRIDAE)

Vector: Infection power (p. 295, *SR4A*)

Speed: 1 minute (1)

Penetration: -6

Power: 13

Nature: Retroviral

Effect: Coma, transformation

HMMHV I is responsible for the creation of banshees, dzoo-noo-qua, goblins, nosferatu, vampires, and wendigo and can only be spread by the Infection power. Once Infected, the character has very little chance to escape the disease; if they do somehow manage to reduce its Power to 0, the character simply dies. A character may burn a point of Edge to either guarantee they pass the test—and die in peace—or to deliberately fail the test and gain a shot at life again as one of the Infected.

If the test fails, the character falls into a coma for (30 - Body) hours as his body transforms. When the character awakens, he has lost all Resonance and technomancer abilities, has acquired the appropriate Infected (Banshee, Dzoo-noo-qua, Goblin, Nosferatu, Vampire, or Wendigo) Quality (see Positive Infected Qualities, p. 79, *Runner's Companion*), and has an Essence of 1 and Magic of 1 (or retains her own Magic attribute, if higher).

HMMHV II (GHILANI MONERIVIRIDAE)

Vector: Contact

Speed: 1 hour (3)

Penetration: -6

Power: 13

Nature: Retroviral

Effect: Coma, Essence loss, transformation

HMMHV II is responsible for the creation of bandersnatchii, fomóraig, and loup-garou, and is typically spread by unprotected contact with those creatures or their bodily fluids. If a character succumbs to the virus, she loses 1 point of Essence—if this brings her Essence to 0 or below, the character dies. Otherwise, the character falls into a coma for (30 - Body) hours as her body transforms. When the character awakens, she has lost all Resonance and technomancer abilities, has acquired the appropriate Infected (Bandersnatch, Fomóraig, or Loup-Garou) Quality (see Positive Infected Qualities, p. 79, *Runner's Companion*), and has a Magic attribute of 1 (or retains her own Magic attribute, if higher). Revitalization gene therapy cannot recover Essence lost to HMMHV II infection.

HMMHV III (GHILANI WICHTIVIRIDAE)

Vector: Contact

Speed: 1 day (10)

Penetration: -6

Power: 8

Nature: Retroviral

Effect: Pain, nausea, Essence loss, transformation

HMMHV III is responsible for the creation of ghouls, and is typically spread by unprotected contact with those creatures or their bodily fluids. Unlike the cases of other retroviruses in this genus, the subject is usually awake and aware during the metamorphosis. Every time the character fails the Disease Resistance Test, he loses 0.1 points of Essence. If his Essence falls to 0 or below, he dies.

The character should keep track of how many points of Essence he loses every time he is Infected with HMMHV III. After losing 1.0 points of Essence in this fashion, the disease halts (if still ongoing). The character loses all Resonance and technomancer abilities and gains the Infected (Ghoul) Quality (see Positive Infected Qualities, p. 79, *Runner's Companion*) and a Magic attribute of 1 (or retains his own Magic attribute, if higher). Revitalization gene therapy cannot recover Essence lost to HMMHV III infection.

"RENFIELD"

Duration: 7 days

Effect: Agility +1, Intuition +1, Strength +1, Euphoria, Immunity (Age), +1 Initiative Pass

"Renfield" is an alchemical compound made from the blood of someone Infected with HMMHV I, and it is used by these creatures to create vampiric pawns. The creator draws some of his own blood and performs certain enchantments on it; this costs him a point of his own Essence. He then injects this drug into his chosen pawn (who may or may not be a willing volunteer).

Once the pawn has become addicted to the drug, he gains the Carrier (HMMHV I) Quality (p. 66) and the Dietary Requirement ("Renfield") and Essence Loss weaknesses. Once transformed, the pawn is dependent upon the drug for his own Essence. Each dose gives him 1D6 points of Essence. "Renfield" has a threshold of 3 for the Addiction Test, and it is both mentally and physically addictive.



The ice shelf they had been traveling on for days gave out to sea ice that was thinner and pock-marked with holes where seals broke through to come up for air. Perhaps three hundred meters out on the ice was Kiu, the bear shapeshifter they had brought along, who was still-hunting, waiting patiently by a hole in the ice for a seal to come up. Polar bears were extinct in the wild, but Kiu was a half-breed and could look the part. She was the bait.

The twins had packed up their AKs and taken out their hunting bows, the matte black of the compound mechanisms painted over in arctic camo. For their part, the sled dogs were quiet, huddled together in their traces—the Siberian had insisted the dogs be mute so their barking would not scare their prey.

The Siberian circled around slowly to the shapeshifter's right, not watching the hole in the ice, where the bear's attention was, or even the bear itself. He stopped just short of fifty meters from the bear and knelt on the ice, his snow-cape helping him blend in with the ice and snow. Eventually, a small black shape appeared in the hole, and with a sudden movement, Kiu's paw lunged down and up, dragging the seal onto the ice.

Almost as soon as the bear began feasting on the dying critter, the seal's wet skin became rimed, and the bear's breath steamed in front of it, her shaggy pelt becoming covered with frost. A great, sinuous dracoform skittered forward from where it had lain undetected on the ice; the slightly silvery cast of its scales shone as its jaws tried to close on the bear's neck. Kiu growled and wrestled with the thing. Dark blood welled up around the fur on her neck and froze almost instantly, forming dark crystals.

The Siberian was already running forward, harpoon in hand, leaping over the sweeping tail as Kiu held the thing steady for the hunter to plant the spear firmly in the back of the icedrakon's neck, where the spinal cord exited the skull. Scale and muscles parted beneath the blow as it found its mark, and the hunter put all his weight against it as he drove the harpoon in further into the brain.

By the time the twins came up, arrows knocked and ready to finish off anything still living, the Siberian had his knife out and was skinning the icedrakon while Kiu finished the seal. The twins put down their bows and bent to help the hunter at his work.

The twins drained its blood into empty canteens, and the Siberian turned its skin inside out to form a bag for the butchered corpse. Kiu finished with the seal and sniffed at the icedrakon's offal, but it was already cold-burned. Using the harpoon as a pole to carry the bag between them, the twins carried the butchered drakon back to the sleds.





DRACOFORMS AND DRACOMORPHS

Posted by Wyrn Watcher

Though I'm no longer actively involved in freelancing, I continue to appreciate the great dracosaurians. After his first choice failed to deliver the requested article, FastJack saw fit to request my assistance. In light of that, I'm here to briefly share a bit of insight into their culture and recent activities. I hope that all will find my small offering enlightening.

- Originally I asked Frosty for this heads up on draconic life, but apparently she's busy globetrotting. Wyrn Watcher is an old friend ... well, he owes me money. The terms of our reconciliation include infodumps like this one.

- FastJack

- Oh give me a break! Jack, I told you I had and continue to have other ... responsibilities. I hoped you of all people would understand.

- Frosty

- You choose your own priorities; I do understand that. When you joined this network, you agreed to be a contributing member. I expect more than innuendo and sly intimation of conspiracy theories from you.

- FastJack

I am a dracobiologist by training, a wyrn watcher by nature, and a shadowrunner by necessity. All of which qualifies me to say that dracoforms and dracomorphs are very, very weird.

DRACOFORMS

At the time of this writing, there are an even dozen species of dragons and closely related dragon-like creatures, which together are called dracoforms. When I say closely related, I mean that from a genetic standpoint the nearest non-draconic relatives to dracoforms are dinosaurs; among dracoforms themselves there exists some substantial genetic disparity. Dragons have about as much in common with the rest of the dracoforms as we metahumans do with various primates.

All dracoforms are of the class Reptilia, the subclass Herpetavia, and from there are divided into four distinct orders: Tetrasauria (everything of the draco genus), Alatophidia (aleuto-serpens genus), Magnavaranus (neovaranus genus), and Hydras (both the hydras)—not that you'll ever need to know that.

- You'd be surprised. Some customers are very specific. It pays to know your business.

- Lyrn

What you really need to know is that dracoforms are uniformly large, predacious reptiles with highly potent innate magical abilities—and intelligent (the least intelligent among them are on the order of the great apes; the most intelligent are sapient and equal or exceed metahumans in cognitive abilities). Precise details on their anatomy aren't generally available because these critters are relatively rare, dangerous, and in some cases sapient and openly disagreeable to poking and prodding. What we do know about dracobiology is patched together from what we've observed over the last sixty years studying specimens in the wild and the few

corpses we can find before the talismongers get to them. The rest is extrapolation and theory based on what we know of other reptiles.

Physical Characteristics

Dracoforms are omnivorous critters. They prefer meat as the primary staple of their diet, but they can and will eat nearly anything, and they're not above scavenging for carrion. Dracoforms are very active and require a lot of food to keep going—the energy deficit on the larger ones, particularly the flyers, is astounding. As such, most dracoforms are very lean and almost continually hungry. Dracoforms can maintain thermal homeostasis without much trouble, and their enzymatic processes are very heat efficient, but from all that we've seen of their behavior their thermal regulation is complicated.

- What he means to say is that “warm-blooded” and “cold-blooded” are outmoded scientific terms, and you can't count on cold weather to slow them down or force them to slow down to conserve body heat, but they do seem to appreciate warmth. I know dragons and drakes like to sun themselves, because I've seen them do it. I also know that feathered serpents don't shiver to warm up. They sort of puff up, trapping little pockets of air beneath their feather-scales to keep warm. It makes them look ... fluffy.

- Sticks

Dracoforms include the biggest saurians still alive. The smallest ones are usually the size of an adult komodo dragon (non-Awakened lizards, two to three meters in length, with a venomous bite, not actual dracomorphs), and the biggest ones—by which I mean great dragons and hydras—are twenty meters long or longer with another twenty meters of tail. Just for comparison, most T-rexes topped out at thirteen meters.

- Hey, where are dragons in the fossil record?

- Slamm-O!

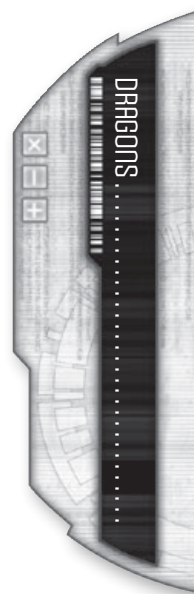
- Missing, mostly. The paleontologists I've spoken to have all agreed that dragons, or pre-draconic dracoforms, should have shown up around sixty-five million years ago when dinosaurs started developing avian characteristics, but no one has publicly announced finding verifiable dracoform bones older than sixty thousand years. However, I have seen physical proof of a fossilized dracoform femur tested at

Instant Message...

Recent searches suggest you might be interested in:

The Dissection of Dzitbalché

Carried out by a joint University of Azatlán-Quetzacoatl Institute surgical team, this trideo documentary contains answers to many questions puzzling the scientific community about draconic biology, such as the mystery of why western dragons have six limbs and feathered serpents have four. This trideo feed is packed with extras, including a commentary track by the lead surgeons and the director. [Download Now!](#)



over a million years old—unfortunately, the Draco Foundation didn't let me keep it.

• Elijah

Part of the reason dracoforms get so big is that they continue to grow throughout their lives—and as no known dracoform has yet died of old age, they could (like some species of tortoise or crocodile) grow very large indeed. It is no surprise that the largest dragons claim to have lived for thousands of years.

One of the defining characteristics of dracoforms is their hide, which is covered by scales and scutes of keratinous fiber which also forms their talons. Depending on the species—and in some cases the individual—these scales can form hard, bony knobs and plates, delicate and brightly-colored scale-feathers, and even horn-like structures. A dracoform's hide and talons are continually growing, allowing dracoforms to quickly replace scales lost in battle or chipped talons—only significant scar tissue will prevent scales from regrowing. Excess scales or scale-feathers will shed on their own, though many dracoforms prefer to scratch or rub them off.

• The more intelligent dracoforms take care to bury, burn, or eat any shed scales around their lairs, possibly to prevent themselves from being targeted with ritual magic. Dragons, of course, generally don't do as much hunting in cities and have to clip their talons regularly to prevent them from becoming overgrown.

• Sticks

• Of course, dragon telesma is worth quite a bit of nuyen ... if you can persuade the wyrm to part with it. Dragons are smart enough not to leave material links lying around, and even non-sapient like draka and hydras are known to bury or eat their shed scales, possibly for the same reason.

• Lyrn

• What have I told you about dealing with dragons?

• Fastjack

• Yeah, but you should see my commission.

• Lyrn

Studies of the most trideogenic dragons and wilderness studies have shown that dracoform individuals can exhibit small but significant changes to their personal appearance, such as the color of their scales, the angle of their horns, scale pattern, etc. Theorized to be at least partially attributable to dracoforms' innate magical nature, this effect is most pronounced in sapient dracoforms, who are believed to be able to consciously or subconsciously influence the process.

Paranormal Characteristics

All dracoforms possess powerful innate magical abilities such as the unconscious magical levitation that enables wyverns and other flying dracoforms to remain in the air. Beyond this, studies have shown that dracoforms—presumably from the time they are hatched (and according to anecdotes, even earlier)—are all dual-natured. This direct access to astral space is thought to be a key development for dracoforms. It may explain their unusual talent

for manipulating magic. Indeed, all sapient dracoforms are known to be magically active.

Besides flight, dracoforms are well-known for their offensive magical abilities, and many can actually “breathe fire” as the legends have it—though this is actually a form of innate spell or elemental attack. Most dracoforms have at least one such offensive power, while others have several.

• Dragons can alter or refine their natural paranormal powers, particularly their breath weapon. That fiery blast you were expecting could be a bolt of lightning or a gout of acid. Always keep your mind open when dealing with dragons.

• Lyrn

Draconic Lifecycle

As reptiles, dracoforms lay eggs. This much we know from studies of non-sapient dracoforms in the wild, and it probably applies to dragons as well—that said, the only dracoform eggs we've found belong to the various species of draka and hydras. Dracoform eggshells are leathery in texture, composed of a keratinized fiber similar to dracoform scales. Most dracoforms build a nest of some kind to keep the eggs warm, and draka have been observed to consume any that do not hatch. Details of mating are extremely sketchy, particularly for dragons—so far they refuse to talk about it.

There are no external signs of a dracoform's sex, though parabologists at the University of Berlin are working on a pheromone sensor to differentiate sex in hydras and dragons.

• Casual observers might note that there seems to be a larger number of male dragons than female dragons. The sex ratio for dragons is completely unknown because we have no way to tell them apart except for autopsy. Hestaby and a couple of other greats have come forward with their sex, but we really have to take their word on it.

• Sticks

• Wait ... you mean Lofwyr might be a queen?

• Cosmo

• It's shapechange magic. Gender is not inherently conserved. That said, Lofwyr has never (to my knowledge) shown up as a female metahuman, and most of the others all seem to have their strict gender preferences in metahuman form as well (except Damon).

• Wyrm Watcher

Young dracoforms are exceptionally rare—indeed, no immature examples of many dracoform species have been found in the wild. Anecdotal reports from the interviews with the late President Dunkelzahn suggest that dracoforms take a long time to mature, which is supported by evidence of draka lifecycles in the wild—young draka can take several years to reach their adult biomass and learn from their parents and group-mates. There is a growing body of evidence that dragons (and possibly other sapient dracoforms) undergo a magical metamorphosis at some point, but this information is completely absent from academic publications.

When they reach a certain age—and possibly size or magical proficiency—dragons make a transition to become great dragons.



AETHERPEDIA KEYWORD SEARCH: The Draco Foundation

Founded as the executors of the great dragon Dunkelzahn's will, the Draco Foundation has become the largest non-profit organization in the world. Still ostensibly chaired by former UCAS Vice President Nadja Daviar, the organization publicly works to enhance metahumanity's ability to interact effectively with the Awakened world. While it's been fifteen years since the First Wyrms' death, many of the will's terms have yet to be fulfilled. Others, such as the bounty offered on blood mages, are ongoing tasks.

The full nature of the Foundation's vast resources and diverse objectives remains shrouded in secrecy. Some facets have been publicly disclosed: the Foundation has brokered agreements between great dragons and a number of metahuman agencies, as they did when Ghostwalker took control of Denver. The Foundation often conducts archeological digs and research, sometimes in direct competition with the Atlantean Foundation. The Draco Foundation also issues grants to promising academic and non-profit pioneers in metamagical and scientific research and sponsors an annual competition in these fields.

Rumors continue to circulate that the Draco Foundation dabbles in the shadows; however, its motivations for such actions remain unclear. A number of known shadowrunners have been linked with the organization. Other groups, including the Illuminates of the New Dawn and the Children of the Dragon, have publicly denounced the Foundation and initiated repeated legal proceedings against them.

This stage of their lifecycle—based on recordings of the dragon Masaru both before and after he made the transition—appears to combine a social promotion, physical metamorphosis, mental and emotional catharsis, and magical initiation. While we only have a dataset of one to go by, Masaru was observed to become significantly larger (11.3% by some estimates) than he was previously (he was already twice the size of an average adult eastern dragon before the transformation) and to display several paranormal abilities that he was not previously known to have had before the transition. How and why dragons undergo this metamorphosis is not understood.

- Dunkelzahn left documents with the Draco Foundation stating he believed Ryumyo was attempting a metamorphosis into something greater than a great dragon. Just what we need, a wyrms going to super-saiyajin 2.
- Baka Dabora

Dracoforms appear to be biologically immortal—their chances of mortality do not appear to increase as they get older,

and given sufficient time, dracoforms can recover from nearly any disease or injury, including completely regenerating lost limbs in a manner of years—but they can and do die, usually by violence or starvation. Even great dragons have been observed to die. Dragons appear to have certain social norms, protocols, and ceremonies surrounding their deaths.

- Some of you will take comfort in the fact that these monsters can be killed. Others will mourn the passing of something unique and magical.
- Sticks
- What about you?
- /dev/grrl
- I'll know when survival comes down to me or a dragon.
- Sticks

DRAKA, DRAKES, AND OTHER ODDITIES

Draka, gorgons, and hydras have a chimerical genetic nature—many of their gene sequences are identical to those in dragons and other dracoforms (as you'd expect from closely-related critters), but the organization is substantially changed. Inverted sequences and inconsistent chromosomal relocations are reminiscent of hybrid species and genetically engineered entities. The analyses remain inconclusive and hotly debated within the academic community.

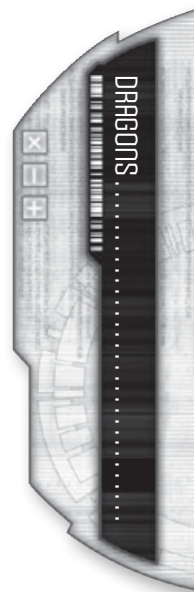
Drakes are even weirder because, while undeniably metahuman, their genetic code contains some of the exact same sequences as draka, dragons, and other dracoforms. Again, their mapping is very odd. Dracobiologists are hesitant to classify drakes as dracoforms or dracomorphs at this time, but most are at least leaning toward labeling them as dracoforms because drakes create proteins and enzymes that are otherwise unique to dracoforms as products of their normal biology, even while in metahuman form.

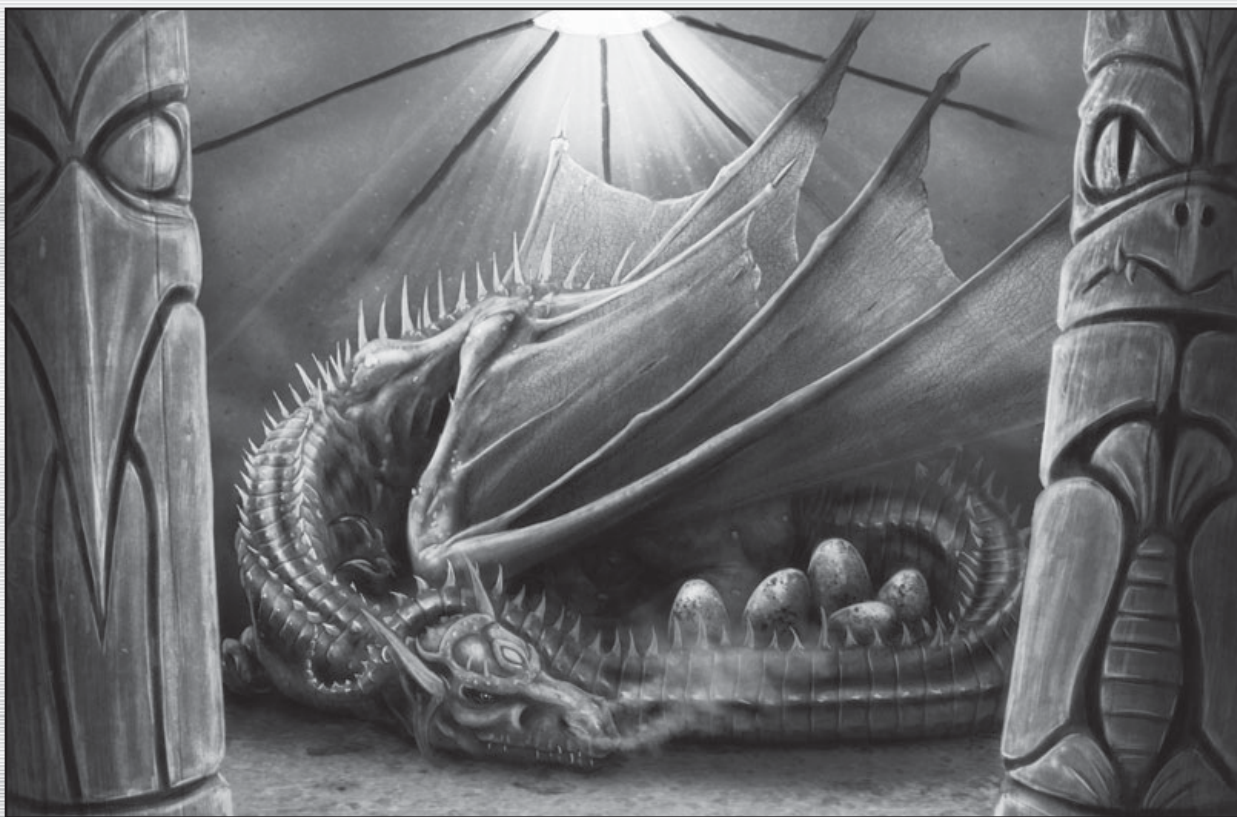
- Some dragons are willing to pay good money for their proteins, but harvesting them can be a bitch if the subject isn't cooperative.
- Lyrn

DRACOMORPHS

A dracomorph is a paranimal that looks like a dragon but isn't. Convergent evolution, biological mimicry, and expression of mythological archetypes are just the most popular theories as to why. Genetic studies have proven that despite looking like dracoforms and possessing paranormal powers, these critters are not closely related to dragons. The most populous (and popular!) of these is the chimera, or false dragon, which can be found in zoos around the world. Rarer are the lindworms, which are sapient paranormal serpents that share many traits with dracoforms and are often mistaken for them, even by parabologists.

- Are these related to those "great anacondas" down in Amazonia?
- Picador
- Anacondas are primitive but powerful serpents; the Snake That Walks is something else.
- Marcos





INCOMING FEED.....



Technically speaking, dracomorphs include spirits that manifest to look like dragons or other dracoforms—wujen are especially known for this, but it is far from uncommon for spirits in many traditions to take on a draconic appearance, given their positions in mythology and magical symbolism. These spiritual dracomorphs generally bear as much resemblance to actual dracoforms as pre-Awakening artistic depictions of dragons do to the real thing.

- There was a study by some UCLA grad students showing that dracomorph spirits have gradually become more “realistic” over the years since the Awakening, presumably because magicians are more aware of what dracoforms look like and subconsciously influencing their conjuration. Of course, that’s a purely hermetic point of view.
- Winterhawk

DRACONIC CULTURE

Dragons have a highly developed culture that metahumans have only caught a glimpse of. There are tantalizing hints of etiquette and ritual in how they address each other, challenge and fight each other, and express their dominance or respect for a given territory. Still, there is much that we do not, cannot know. Most dragons appear to communicate using a form of telepathy known as Dragonspeech, along with ritual gestures, posture, and in certain cases aerial dances. If they have a unique written language, no example of it has ever been found. Even draconic names and titles—such as Gold Master, Loremaster, and Night Master—are opaque to metahuman interpretation. That said, some aspects of dragon psychology and sociology have become apparent, thanks in no small part to documents released by the Draco Foundation.

DRAGON RELATIONS

For the most part, interactions between dragons remain a mystery to metahumanity. Those metahumans who are most closely tied to dragonkind have been unwilling to share their secrets, and interviews with dragons yield few substantive answers. As a consequence, this section is regrettably briefer than I would prefer. Nonetheless, a review of newsfeeds can provide at least a limited number of inferences.

- Dunkelzahn’s and Masaru’s revelations during Wyrms Talk episodes are a sharp contrast to the draconic secrecy described here. Much of our knowledge comes from their open discussion.
- Sunshine

Among those inferences is the clear fact that dragons, particularly the greats, do not stand in philosophical solidarity. One of the most graphic examples was the well-documented battle between Lofwyr and Nachtmeister in June 2062. The two physical and corporate powerhouses met in a duel to the death over the city of Frankfurt. Lofwyr ultimately triumphed in the epic battle, killing his opponent. Similarly, Schwartzkopf’s direct involvement in metahuman education is a stark contrast to Sirrurg’s ongoing propensity for devastation.

In spite of this, it’s clear that many dragons do show a great deal of respect for one another. This includes those believed to be otherwise at odds. The reports of the extensive aerial dance ritual performed over DeeCee shortly after Dunkelzahn’s death is a graphic example. While conspiracists speak of “dragon council” meetings, there’s no evidence to support such a fantastic notion.

Those who have the keenest insight into draconic society are, no doubt, those granted an opportunity to work for or study under a dragon. The selection criteria for such positions are unclear, and they most likely vary from dragon to dragon. What is clear is that those who have worked in such environments are invariably changed by their experiences. Though metahumans might not always describe the personality shifts as positive ones, it's irrefutable that working closely with a dragon can trigger a level of intellectual and philosophical maturation.

Many dragons have also assumed pivotal roles within primarily metahuman organizations. There are countless instances of dragons playing the part of a mover or shaker in the corporate, spiritual, academic, political, and even social aspects of society. Though the motivations for these actions are mysterious, our modern world is often redefined by them.

Adult Dragons

The most common apprentice to a dragon is, unsurprisingly, a younger dragon. Great dragons commonly take younger dragons under their tutelage. Clearly the younger dragon benefits from the relationship—they garner a tremendous educational opportunity. It's unclear how the elder dragon is compensated for these efforts, as they clearly accept a level of risk by allowing another dragon into their inner circle.

Drakes

Metahumans who possess the innate ability to assume a draconic form are highly sought by dragons to serve as aides. It's unclear what their duties entail, but no drake I know of who is employed by a dragon has ever successfully terminated that employment. A number of drakes have accepted asylum with the Draco Foundation, but it's unknown why they have chosen to make that decision.

- The drakes I've met don't want to talk about why they're hiding. The most I could get was the comment from one that it was "more of a commitment than I'm willing to make."
- Elijah

Paranormal Animals

Many dragons include sapient and near-sapient Awakened animals in their entourage. This may be due to their inherent lack of a cultural bias in favor of metahumans or their typically greater interest in the environmental causes that so many dragons espouse. In any case, dragons often provide employment or establish protectorates for beings such as sasquatches, centaurs, merrow, and even draka. The latter in particular are about as intelligent as chimpanzees or gorillas, and dragons appear to be able to communicate with them somewhat.

Spirits

Some dragons become closely affiliated with the astral world and with free spirits in particular. These entities have the ability to establish longer-term working relationships with a dragon, which may be well-suited to the species' longer-term goals. Presumably, the terms of employment are beneficial to both the dragon and the free spirit, but it's unclear how the spirit

benefits from the relationship. It's likely that some of the beings identified as drakes may, in fact, be a variant ally spirit unique to draconic magical traditions.

Metahumans

A number of metahumans that are not believed to be drakes have entered careers in the service of dragons. The duties and career fields can vary substantially, but one thing is consistent. While many such employees prosper for an extended period, invariably metahumans do make mistakes that often lead to a bad end. The old proverb exists for a reason.

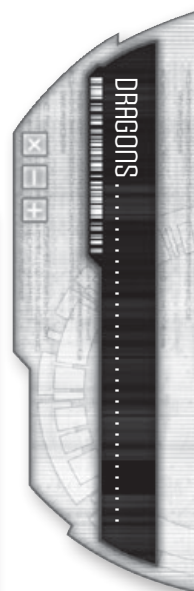
DRAGON MAGIC

Interviews with dragons regarding the nature of magic are generally met with stony silence. While it's clear that dragons are inherently magical, it's unclear if there is a consistent metaphysical doctrine behind their practice of magic. Anecdotal reports indicate that metahuman magicians can learn magical techniques from dragons, implying that their use of magic is more than an instinctive behavior.

AETHERPEDIA ENTRY: The Children of the Dragon

This is a religious sect that sprang up following the assassination of President Dunkelzahn. The Children of the Dragon (CotD) were founded after their leader David Dragonson, who witnessed Dunkelzahn's death, had an ecstatic vision experience that Awakened his latent magical abilities. The CotD pursues peace and understanding between metahumans and other entities, including free spirits, sapient critters, and synthetic intelligences, and promotes the worship of the Great Dragon Spirit, whose mortal avatar was Dunkelzahn. Most of the Sixth World believes that the CotD, and their founder David Dragonson in particular, are self-deluded dragon worshippers, but their charitable efforts to appease the plight of the SINless and accept every kind of sapient have grown the church.

The emergence of Ghostwalker from Dunkelzahn's Rift during the Year of the Comet was witnessed by longtime CotD member Joshua Morningstar. The experience triggered an ecstatic vision for him similar to that of Dragonson. Already a magician, Morningstar Awakened as a drake. The difference between Morningstar and Dragonson's visions sparked an internal conflict for the CotD, and the Denver congregations split off to become their own sect: the Church of the Dragon Reborn. Morningstar espouses the belief that Ghostwalker is the new avatar of the Great Dragon Spirit. Ghostwalker himself has not publicly interacted with the church but is said to quietly support its efforts.



In spite of this, the nature of draconic magic is clearly different from traditions practiced by metahumans. Whereas an Awakened metahuman's interaction with spirits is defined by their tradition, observation has shown that dragons have a broader interpretation. This understanding allows them to summon any known type of spirit and, in several cases, spirits that experienced metahuman magicians were completely unable to identify.

Further, dragons are capable of channeling dramatically more mana than even the most experienced metahumans. This may be a direct consequence of their Awakened nature or their unique tradition and metamagical techniques.

THE GREAT DRAGONS

There are seventeen confirmed living great dragons at this time. There may be others—particularly ones that don't want to be found. These creatures are among the most powerful and knowledgeable entities known. Crossing any one of them is an extremely perilous undertaking. Keep in mind that working for one of them most likely means crossing another one.

ADEN

Aden is best known for destroying the city of Tehran in 2020. His actions were arguably provoked—the Ayatollah had declared a jihad against all Awakened. Nonetheless, the destruction was truly eye-opening, as most metahumans had severely underestimated the power of a great dragon prior to the event. Until Ghostwalker's descent upon Denver, Aden's attack was the most brutal interaction between metahumanity and dragonkind.

• I think your pronouns are off here. Aden's a female, or at least her preferred metahuman form is female. I'm sure she finds that as

useful as I do when trying to remain inconspicuous when working within Muslim society.

• Goat Foot

Since that time, Aden has shown his hand on very few occasions. Though there is strong evidence that he has worked to influence Middle Eastern politics, all of these actions have been through metahuman intermediaries. Aden is clearly opposed to Islamic unification efforts, but it remains unclear if this is due to philosophical beliefs or merely a power play against Lofwyr's holdings in the region.

ALAMAIS

Generally identified as Lofwyr's brother, Alamaais appears to suffer from a strong sibling rivalry. Clearly, this wyrm has not enjoyed the same level of success within metahuman society that Lofwyr has attained. At the same time, any measurement based upon metahuman standards is largely irrelevant to a great dragon.

Reliable reports indicate that this wyrm prefers to work with disenfranchised members of society—particularly policlubbers, terrorists, and syndicates—rather than to affect metahumans from a government or corporate approach. This hasn't always gone well.

• Alamaais was deeply involved with a racist policlub in the late forties and early fifties. From what I've heard, that led to him getting shot out of the sky by orbital lasers back in '53. Not even dragons always learn from their mistakes

• Aufheben

More recently, Alamaais' name has come up in association with donations to the Ulster Resistance in Tír na nÓg. There have

KNOWN GREAT DRAGONS

Name	Subspecies	Sex	Coloring	Primary Lair
Aden	Eastern (Sirrush)	Male	Sandy/Bronze	Mount Ararat, Kurdish Autonomous Zone
Alamaais	Western	Male	Golden/Red	Spitsbergen, Scandinavian Union
Arleesh	Feathered Serpent	Female	Dark Green	Unknown
Celedyr	Western	Male	Silver/Brass	Caerleon, Wales, United Kingdom
Ghostwalker	Western	Male	Ivory/Blue	Denver, Front Range Free Zone
Hestaby	Western	Female	Bronze/Copper	Mount Shasta, California Free State
Hualpa	Feathered Serpent	Male	Bright Green	Kuelap, Amazonia
Kaltenstein	Western	Male	Grey/Blue	Unknown
Lofwyr	Western	Male	Golden	Essen, Allied German States
Lung	Eastern	Male	Red/Gold	T'ai Shan Mountain, China Coastal Provinces
Masaru	Eastern	Male	Black/Blue	Visayan island, Philippines
Mujaji	Feathered Serpent	Female	Blue/Green	Table Mountain, Azanian Confederation
Rhonabwy	Western	Male	Scarlet	Llandovery, Wales, United Kingdom
Ryumyo	Eastern	Male	Silver/Red	Mount Mihara, Japan
Schwartzkopf	Western	Male	Dark Green	Marienbad, Czech Republic
The Sea Dragon	Leviathan	Female	Silver/Green	Cardigan Bay, Wales, United Kingdom
Sirrurg	Western	Male	Green	Santos, Amazonia

PROMINENT ADULT DRAGONS

Great dragons are certainly the best known and most powerful, but they are a substantial minority of dragonkind. There are dozens of adult dragons in the world, many of whom are very well-known regionally and others who prefer to live their lives more quietly. A few of the dragons who have repeatedly found their way into the shadows follow.

Damon—Western Dragon

Damon is one alias of an adult dragon that has become an urban legend. Stories tell of a violet-eyed beauty—the gender varies—who appears in nightclubs, parties hard, spends freely, seduces a mate, and then reveals that s/he is a dragon. Most sightings have been in North America, but s/he likely spent most of 2069 traveling through Europe and Asia. Tabloids have published countless stories of Damon's love children, and more than one company has started aggressively marketing violet contacts.

A few images of this wyrm in its natural form bear a striking resemblance to Dunkelzahn's profile, though the coloration is silver and purple. Based upon recorded snatches of conversations, it seems likely that Damon has holdings in NeoNET or its subsidiaries. A recent

sighting had Damon visiting former Truman Technologies in and around Chicago—though it's unclear what drew the wyrm there.

Perianwyr—Western Dragon

Most first heard of Perianwyr when Dunkelzahn bequeathed him his music collection. Today, he is best known for operating the Weekday Eclipse dance club and music label in Denver. His contacts in the recording industry have become extensive, and a number of recent successes, including the technomancer-fronted Virtual Youth and Tribal Anglo, signed deals with major labels after performing there.

- As with all dragons, Peri's history is shadowy and complicated. Prior to becoming a club owner, Perianwyr worked for years as a contract assassin with a human partner. Most of their assignments came from Aztlan, but they did accept contracts from a number of other sponsors. Peri appeared to retire after his partner died, but recent rumors suggest that he's still active performing network, exclusively taking assignments from Ghostwalker—possibly why Peri is allowed to dwell in Denver.
- Hard Exit

also been several reported sightings of a great dragon matching his description in the Ukraine and the Allied German state of Pomoyra.

ARLEESH

Anecdotal reports of Arleesh's activities regularly surface on shadow nexi. She was a bit late to the party—she's believed to have first appeared in 2049—but her presence in the shadows has been more “hands on” than any of the other great dragons. Dunkelzahn's directive of support for her efforts in his will suggests that she is “one of the good guys.” First-hand accounts, however, are not always consistent with that belief.

It's clear that Arleesh has a particular interest in arcanoarcheological specimens, specifically pre-Awakening magical artifacts. It also seems that she has less of a support network than most of the great dragons. Rather, Arleesh seems to spend all of her time in pursuit of these specific artifacts. The anecdotal reports do little to offer an archeological basis for what draws her interest. These stories traced her involvement in acquisitions—legal and otherwise—from public and private collections in search of an enormous variety of items from a broad range of civilizations. While the items sought are all ancient, they do not appear to be linked.

- She's almost certainly tracking down imps—check the spirits file. I've heard of them surfacing on ancient artifacts, and they are dangerous enough that a great dragon might find them interesting.
- Axis Mundi

CELEDYR

Celedyr's corporate interests have always been closely tied to Matrix development and innovation. His insights led to fiscal

success with Transys Neuronet, which later merged with Erika and Novatech to become NeoNET. As director of research and development at NeoNET, Celedyr is second only to Lofwyr in terms of corporate investment (as far as we know).

Perpetually obsessed with developments in Matrixtech, linguistics, and neural interfaces—particularly those associated with technomancers and opportunities for Awakened creatures to better use the Matrix—Celedyr is always willing to use shadow resources to further his research. His operatives are drawn from the Knights of Rage organization. This former British street gang is characterized by a belief in a connection between the ancient Nubian and Celtic cultures. New members are often recruited from active gangs and prized for their street knowledge, but operatives undergo education and training until they are extremely capable in both technological and magical areas.

GHOSTWALKER

When Ghostwalker emerged from Dunkelzahn's Rift in DeeCee, onlookers were stunned. Many believed that the great dragon was nothing less than the second coming of the First Wyrn. Doubts soon surfaced when the newly emerged great dragon flew directly to Denver and began to systematically destroy the city and all who opposed him—particularly Aztlan and Aztechnolgy.

Since then, Ghostwalker's politics, philosophy, and dedication to the Front Range Free Zone have clearly distinguished him from the dragon posited to be his brother. While Denver remains a divided city, it does now have a single draconic ruler. Ghostwalker has made it clear that metahumans dwell within the city only with his permission. It has been more than a decade since he began to consolidate his holdings and banish virtually anyone



Yat Gwan—Eastern Dragon

The guardian of Zhurong Peak, Yat Gwan is believed to be a vassal to Lung who is assigned to protect the sacred mountain. Local metahumans treat him with great reverence. In return, he has consistently acted as a protector of the communities near the mountain.

Uncharacteristically for a dragon, Yat Gwan has shown an intense interest in nuclear power and weapons. He owns the majority of Nucor Energy, a Chinese national corporation which makes equipment for many applications in nuclear engineering. Yat Gwan also funds nuclear research programs, in particular Dr. Dawn Crowfeather's work in determining the relationship between mana and nuclear energy. It's unclear how these interests can integrate with the typically eco-friendly beliefs of most dragons.

Zacaultipan—Feathered Serpent

Once employed by Aztechnology as an instructor in combat thaumaturgy, Zacaultipan made it abundantly clear that she is no longer associated with them by destroying the Leopard Guard training facility where she was working and then leaving to establish a new lair in Denver. Zacaultipan is the only known feathered serpent to have stayed in Denver after Ghostwalker's arrival, and she may be Ghostwalker's vassal.

Physical sightings of Zacaultipan have been rare, though there are a number of astral sightings that suggests she is doing a great deal of work with Ghostwalker's spirit allies. In 2064, the feathered serpent Dzitbalché, reportedly Zacaultipan's sibling, was executed for terrorist actions following the Yucatan peace summit. Zacaultipan failed in an attempt to rescue him. While she was seen returning to Denver, there have been few confirmed sightings since that time.

affiliated with another dragon from his domain, but Ghostwalker's future plans remain unclear.

HESTABY

Since Dunkelzahn's death, Hestaby has embraced the public role as the "metahuman-friendly" great dragon. While that may seem a contradiction in terms, her media presence has certainly worked to give her an air of approachability. From her first appearance to stop the Tír invasion of California Free State in 2053, Hestaby has been dedicated to preserving the lives and rights of metahumans, Awakened animals, and the environment. In conjunction with her willingness to speak to the press, this combination led to a very positive view of this wyrm in society at large.

Her role in opening the borders of Tír Tairngire and instituting free elections there only enhanced this view, but it may have alienated a few of her kind. Hestaby is one of the very few former Tír Princes who is still involved with that nation's governance. As the Tír has begun to recover from its economic crisis, many have credited Hestaby's decisions in the turnaround.

HUALPA

Hualpa was first observed flying over the Yucatan in January 2012, but little was known of this great dragon until he led the rebellion against Brazil in late 2034. Over the course of a three-month campaign, Hualpa and two other great dragons led their forces—including shapeshifters, sapient paranormals, and metahumans—to overthrow the Brazilian government and established a new nation that was far friendlier to the Awakened and the environment.

Hualpa continues to hold an authoritative role in Amazonian politics. Since the cessation of the Yucatan conflict, Hualpa has kept his nation's troops on active duty and executed frequent training exercises on the Aztlan-Amazonia border. The dragon has made several speeches and released several pointed letters to the UN and the ICC denouncing Aztlan's environmentally irresponsible practices and infringement on Amazonia's sovereign soil. It may be just a matter of time before drastic action is taken.

• That situation has stayed a powder keg longer than anyone expected. It's amazing that tempo smuggling hasn't set this off. If you have to cross that border, use a boat.

• Marcos

KALTENSTEIN

Most metahumans thought that Kaltenstein was slain in an encounter with Lofwyr and Nebelherr back in 2012. However, this great dragon appears to have remained active in the shadows since that time. While public appearances have been only anecdotally confirmed, it's believed that Kaltenstein played a critical role in the founding and governance of the Black Forest Troll Kingdom. In fact, a dragon's lair uncovered shortly after King Berthold's 2061 disappearance is generally credited to Kaltenstein. Rumors circulate that Kaltenstein may have been the king, but no one who might know the truth has stepped forward to confirm or deny this.

Since then, Kaltenstein's name has continued to surface in a variety of shadow discussions. He's generally credited as having strong interests in securing metahuman rights and eliminating toxic threats. Some rumors associate this wyrm with a continued interest in the polluted SOX region. While this does fit with his concern about toxic magic, the number of instances seems to exceed those typically credited to Kaltenstein. The basis for this remains unclear, but it may date back to the 2012 incident that resulted in his initial disappearance.

LOFWYR

It's difficult to address the issue of Lofwyr without also touching on Saeder-Krupp Enterprises. The golden wyrm is by far best known for his megacorporate success. Though he first appeared in Mauserberg in 2012, he seemed to become rapidly active in the corporate world. In 2036, he stunned the world with his revelation that he was the majority shareholder of BMW/Krupp. In the following years, Lofwyr moved quickly to consolidate his holdings in a variety of corporations into the massive entity that became Saeder-Krupp.



Since that time, Lofwyr has constantly worked to expand his already extensive holdings. While a number of other great dragons seem averse to this, it's clear that the majority of his maneuvers have been successful. Saeder-Krupp has extensive interests on every continent and in nearly every nation.

This dragon masterfully maneuvers corporations, nations, and individual metahumans like simple chess pieces. Lofwyr's specific goals are too vast to address, but it's reasonable to assume that Lofwyr is focused on owning everything. While many have stymied his plans in the short-term, he clearly plays a game that spans far beyond a single metahuman lifetime. The years since the Awakening are little more than a start.

LUNG

Lung appeared over the Great Wall of China in 2012 and spent the next fifty years out of the public eye. Some of this time was, most likely, spent seizing control of the Red Dragon Triad—though neither the dragon nor the triad will admit to this involvement. Then, in 2062, Lung descended upon T'ai Shan Mountain on Chinese New Year and seized it as his lair.

Since that time, Lung appears to have entered an ongoing competition with Ryumyo to seize control of mystical sites throughout Asia and the Pacific Rim. The ultimate purpose for these holdings remains unclear, but both seem highly motivated and, by draconic standards, impatient. In spite of this conflict, the two seem to maintain a cordial relationship with regular visits in metahuman form.

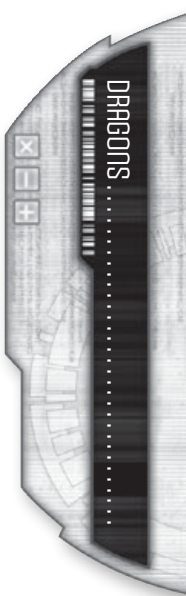
- Lung has a strong interest in acquiring three of the four legendary Coins of Luck. The first coin, Lu (Wealth) went to a previously unknown fisherman who died moments after receiving it. Dunkelzahn left the second coin, Shou (Longevity) to Lung in his will. The third coin, Feng (Fertility) went to Sharon Chang-Wu, famed mother of the Wuxing quintuplets. The fourth and final coin, Fu (Happiness/general good fortune) has only surfaced in rumors.
- Elijah

MASARU

The youngest of the great dragons, yet still ancient by metahuman standards, Masaru apparently only garnered that status in 2042. Since that time, Masaru has been particularly active in the Philippines. In 2059, he published a manifesto detailing his plans to liberate the islands from Imperial Japanese rule and to establish an independent democracy.

The rebellion has since proven successful, but the cost in metahuman lives and property damage was substantial—especially when compared to the maneuverings of other great dragons. It wasn't until late 2067 that martial law was repealed in the Philippines. In the five years since, the elected government has attained a level of stability, and Masaru has maintained a role as an advisor to President Mendoza.

While Masaru is clearly interested in maintaining his homeland's independence, it's unclear what his other priorities might be. Repeated sightings over mainland China seem to support rumors that Masaru may be working in conjunction with Lung. The nature of this relationship, and the probable outcome, remains very much in question.



MUJAJI

The Rain Queen is dedicated to protecting South Africa and all of its inhabitants. These include the metahuman Xhosa people, but also mundane and Awakened animals. From her lair atop Table Mountain, overlooking Cape Town, Mujaji seems to be aware of any intrusions within the region. She takes her role as guardian quite seriously and is seemingly ever-vigilant in protecting her “children.” Poachers, pirates, slavers, and any polluting intruders are dealt with in the most severe way possible.

Mujaji clearly has a love-hate relationship with the elves of the Zulu nation. She cooperates with them, in an effort to preserve the nation, its resources, Awakened species, and sacred sites from exploitation, but, at the same time, her cadre of shamans seems every bit as interested in preventing the Zulu from gaining political ascendancy in the Azanian Confederation. In spite of a strong working relationship, it's clear that there are long-standing issues that have not been resolved.

The only recent reports of her travels outside of her home region implicate Mujaji in meetings with Hualpa and Arleesh. This suggests that she might have an interest in Amazonia or that there might be an issue of particular concern to the three great feathered serpents. The nature of such a concern remains unclear but the notion of these three working in concert is surely unsettling.

- The Rain Queen is traditionally the matrilineal heir of the Mujaji royal family, but the dynasty lapsed around the time of the Awakening as the last Rain Queen died without a suitable heir. The dragon was confirmed as the reincarnation of the first Rain Queen after performing a series of “miracles” for the Xhosa peoples and leading to the creation of a Xhosa-dominated state in what would be the Azanian Confederation.
- Goat Foot

RHONABWY

In 2012, Rhonabwy Awakened in a bestial rage which devastated the town of Caerfyrddin in Wales. Shockingly, a few days later he appeared to regain his senses, apologized, and made restitution to the families of those he killed. Shortly thereafter, he established a new underground lair in Llandoverly. Since that move, his public appearances have been relatively uncommon.

According to a file that circulated through the shadows a few years back, the scarlet dragon of Wales became entranced by the song of the Sea Dragon. Through guile and magic, they mated, but his deception caused them to part badly. The Draco Foundation believes that Rhonabwy later stole the eggs and entrusted them with Hestaby.

A thorough search of his holdings indicates that Rhonabwy is an adept businessman with resources that are surprising by even great dragon standards. This wyrm has substantial corporate holdings and minority positions in numerous megacorporations, including several of the Big Ten. While he does use these resources to provide support to the musical arts, he's also been implicated in funding a number of political organizations that are opposed to elf-supremacist governance.

RYUMYO

Many consider Ryumyo to be the herald of the Awakening. His appearance on December 24, 2011 near Mount Fuji stunned the

world. Since then, he has become an archetypal symbol of Japan, where many followers of Shinto worship him as a kami manifestation.

Ryumyo has been quick to take advantage of this belief. Since that time, he has used the respect that others grant him to assume government advisory roles and to recruit the Watada-Rengo as his soldiers. Rumors suggest that this wyrm has been using his powers in competition with Lung for control of the Ring of Fire. These rumors also imply that the 2061 Unzen Volcano eruption was caused by Ryumyo's manipulation of the dragon lines linked to the Ring of Fire. If this were true, then this patron kami would have been responsible for the largest loss of life in Japan's history.

Since that time, things have not gone as well for the wyrm. Masaru's association with Lung may have turned the tide against him. A large portion of the Neo-Tokyo Watada-Rengo switched over to the Wanibuchi-Rengo, away from Ryumyo's influence and including the free spirit Jurojin who had served as Ryumyo's aide for many years.

SCHWARTZKOPF

While Schwartzkopf has dabbled in metahuman politics, particularly near his home lair in Marienbad, this great dragon gives the impression that his primary love is research. For fifty years, Schwartzkopf has held a faculty position at the University of Prague. There, he teaches advanced magical theory courses and serves as a mentor to exceptional graduate students.

Schwartzkopf's students have been critically involved in pioneering much of the work involved in the Unified Magic Theory. To expound upon this, the dragon often sponsors scholarships for practitioners of traditions that are foreign to Prague. This gives Schwartzkopf and his students an opportunity to study the practices of a different tradition and a chance for the visitor to learn the hermetic and Wiccan traditions that are more common in Prague.

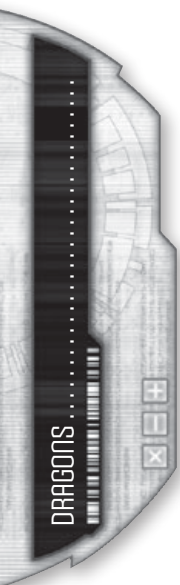
Another of Schwartzkopf's academic pursuits is the field of arcanoarcheology. In pursuing this, he has sponsored the assembly of a vast magical library at the University of Prague. In addition to a complete collection of every credible text published since the Awakening, the library also has a far-reaching range of ancient and historic volumes. In some cases, these texts have been secured from private collections or museums at great expense. In other cases, Schwartzkopf has obtained them after sponsoring a successful field study.

- Masaru is working on a library project at Alexandria that competes with Schwartzkopf's. I was involved in a strained situation when their respective agents were both seeking the same tome.
- Lyran

THE SEA DRAGON

Believed to be the only living great leviathan, the Sea Dragon has had no public interaction with metahumans. The available information is compiled exclusively from anecdotal reports. As such, it all needs to be very carefully considered. None of the other dragons have ever mentioned her in public statements, and all of the other usual sources have remained silent.

Aside from the information mentioned in the earlier entry on Rhonabwy, most reports on the Sea Dragon come from ocean-based sapient critters and ecoterrorists. In several cases, terrorists have proudly claimed that their strikes against oceanic



polluters were sponsored by the Sea Dragon. In a few rare interviews, merrow have mentioned the Sea Dragon and her court.

This lack of information makes it extremely hard to guess at her goals. The terrorist activity suggests that she is willing to take extreme actions to remove polluting surface dwellers from her domain. If the Rhonabwy story is accurate, then it's likely that she may also be willing to go to extreme lengths to obtain dragon eggs. Beyond that, any other motivations remain unknown.

SIRRURG

Sirrurg's first appearance was when he helped Hualpa create the nation of Amazonia. Surviving footage from these battles shows this dragon viciously attacking any metahuman in sight, including some of his own troops. His actions, particularly those taken against non-combatants and children, very nearly prevented the UN acknowledgement of Amazonia. Sirrurg clearly revels in battle.

Since then, his public appearances have all been described as incidents. Throughout the thirties, Sirrurg made unprovoked attacks on a number of corporate enclaves and production facilities. In 2041, he attacked EuroAir Flight 329, a passenger plane on a routine flight. There were no survivors. Shortly after that, sightings of this wyrm ceased. He never attempted to make any sort of public statement to metahumanity to explain his actions or issue an ultimatum.

While he is believed to still lair in Amazonia, his current activities remain a mystery. Various ecoterrorist cells have reported that they receive sponsorship from Sirrurg, but there has been no confirmation or denial of these reports. As a founding member of Amazonia, it's reasonable to assume that Sirrurg has strong environmental beliefs. It's consistent with his militant nature to think that he might fund such activities, but it's surprising that he would stay away from the frontlines for over thirty years.

DRACONIC LEGENDS

As has probably become evident, much of the information about dragonkind comes second- or third-hand. Sources are rarely reliable, and direct confirmation is virtually impossible to obtain. In spite of all that, there are a few rumors that are even more questionable.

DRACONIC INFORMATION VIRTUAL EXCHANGE (DIVE)

Before I get into the rumors, I'd appreciate FastJack's indulgence in allowing me to plug my own VPN and data haven. DIVE is focused on compiling any information—first-hand accounts, trid footage, legends, or even crazy rumors—about dragons. We're a friendly bunch, and membership is cheap. If you're interested in finding out more about dragons, please stop by. I'll be happy to offer a three-month free trial to any JackPoint members.

- A few years back, there was a cabal of assassins using information from DIVE to track down dragons. I have it on very good authority that they don't exist anymore.
- Ecotope

FANANY

According to local legends, a massive seven-headed snake creature inhabits Madagascar. There are no surviving locals to give it a name, but Madagascar legend has supplied the name Fanany,

which pirates and other itinerants have adopted to refer to this creature. I've heard enough rumors to think the stories just might be true. The gist of the stories is that Madagascar houses a massive cave network filled with incubating dracoform eggs, guarded by an enormous seven-headed dragon that warms the sands that the eggs are buried in with its fiery breath—and eats intruders.

- A "Great Hydra?"
- Stone

Madagascar has been largely uninhabited since VITAS cleared it out in 2010; aside from a few ramshackle pirate enclaves, the place doesn't receive a whole lot of visitors. So if Fanany does exist, I'm not counting on anyone surviving to verify it soon.

- Those pirate enclaves have gotten a lot quieter over the last few years. Fewer and fewer people are willing to leave the towns or even visit the island.
- Traveler Jones

M'BOI

Ever since the army of the Amazon Awakened began their attacks in South America, dragon watchers have sought the identity of the second great feathered serpent. While its identity and philosophical outlook remain a mystery, a name has recently surfaced. A few postings on DIVE—from guest accounts traced back to Amazonia—mentioned sightings of a blue-green great dragon named M'Boi. Unfortunately, that's simply the Guaraní word for snake.

It's also possible that M'Boi is not in fact a dragon. Rather, he might be an elder lindworm. I've seen some reports that a high-ranking member of Amazonian Intelligence falls into that category. Regardless of his ancestry, M'boi certainly has a vested interest in the environment and little interest in metahumanity.

- There is at least one lindworm working for Amazonian Intelligence—I suspect it may even be in charge of their counter-espionage services. I do not know its name, but its handiwork is suitably subtle and draconian.
- Fianchetto

GAME INFORMATION

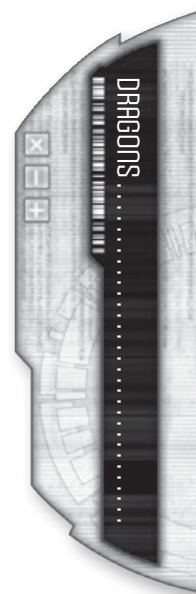
Individual dracoforms and dracomorphs have been known to exhibit unusual paranormal powers; these additional powers and abilities are represented as "Optional Powers," and they may be added to a critter at the gamemaster's discretion. Sapient dracoforms and dracomorphs should always be treated as Prime Runners (p. 284, SR4A), and most dracoform/dracomorph magicians are initiates.

While not all dracoforms and dracomorphs are sapient, many possess a high degree of animal intelligence. Dragons (and potentially drakes) can use the Dragonspeech power to communicate with these critters to a limited degree and, in some cases, train or condition them to respond to simple commands.

CHIMERA

Iguana chimera

The chimera, or false dragon, is a 3.7-meter lizard with heavy dun-and-brown scales that pale to tan along its belly. It bears a



EXPANDED DRAGONSPREECH

Dragonspeech (p. 210) is a key ability for dragons and other dracoforms that lack the ability to speak on their own. What few know is that dracoforms can further develop this ability to mimic certain spells, though most dragons are magicians in their own right and do not need to do so. In practice, any dracoform with the Dragonspeech power can have any Detection spell with the psychic descriptor as an Innate Spell.

At the gamemaster's discretion, any drake character with the Dragonspeech power may also learn any Detection spell with the psychic descriptor as an Innate Spell for 5 Karma each. The character must be instructed by a dragon or other dracoform with the Dragonspeech power and the appropriate Innate Spell, and this uses the same mechanics as learning a spell (Learning Spells, p. 182, SR4A).

remarkable resemblance to a small, wingless western dragon in the shape of both its head and body, and it is often mistaken as such—besides the lack of wings, the best tell-tale of the chimera is the ruff of skin around its neck. When the chimera feels threatened—usually by any creature over troll-sized or bigger—the ruff is raised as part of an elaborate threat display accompanied by hissing and mock charges. If the creature flees, the chimera generally tries to run it down and kill it—when one stands its ground, the chimera may eventually back off and attempt to avoid it.

A carnivore, the chimera is a solitary hunter that will eat whatever it can catch, particularly snakes. Native to the hot deserts of southwestern North America and Latin America, the chimera has become a popular denizen of Awakened zoos across the planet. It has also been accidentally introduced to the deserts of the Australian outback, where its immunity to poisons has given it a considerable advantage over some of the native wildlife.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
5	6	5	5	4	3	2	4	3	6	5	8	1

Movement: 10/45

Skills: Assensing 3, Astral Combat 4, Intimidation 2, Perception 3, Stealth group 4, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Armor (6/6), Concealment (Self), Dual Natured, Immunity (Toxins), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: 5P, AP -1), Venom (see Komodo Dragon Venom, p. 92)

Optional Powers: Elemental Attack (Fire)

Weaknesses: Vulnerability (Ferrous Metals)

FIREDRAGON

Neovaranus ignis

A distant relative to dragons, firedraka are 1.25-meter-long wingless dracoforms that are strongly reminiscent of western dragons and drakes with reddish-brown scales. Firedrakon tend to inhabit areas with strong volcanic activity, particularly the volcanic

islands and mountain ranges that make up the Ring of Fire, and near areas of strong dragon activity such as the Welsh Dragon Lands. They are fast, aggressive hunters who will hunt and kill intruders in their territory even when not hungry. Firedraka live in small family groups of up to eight adults that are led by a dominant female. Younger females will eventually challenge the matriarch; though such matches are rarely fatal, the loser is forced out of the group.

Firedraka have an innate intelligence comparable to orangutans, and dragons have been known to utilize firedraka as guardian paranimals near their lairs, leaving food animals nearby to restrict their hunting range. Dragons accomplish this with a combination of body language, Dragonspeech, and behavioral conditioning; drakes in the employ of dragons are usually taught the simple commands and correct draconic body language to bypass firedraka unharmed or set them hunting.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	3	4	4	2	4	4	3	4	6	6	8	2

Movement: 15/50

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 5, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Elemental Attack) 6, Perception 5, Stealth group 5, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Dual Natured, Elemental Attack (Fire), Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Hardened Armor (4), Immunity (Fire), Mystic Armor (4), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: 4P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Cold, Mild)

GORGON

Draco odiosus

Extremely rare and dangerous, the gorgon is an 8-meter-long, wingless dracoform native to the Mediterranean. Gorgons have grayish-black scales (sometimes with a bluish mottling along the belly), webbed feet, a ridge of spines down their back, and a double row of serrated teeth that are mostly pointed backwards. Primarily a water dweller with well-concealed gills on its long neck, the gorgon possesses vestigial lungs that allow it to operate on the surface indefinitely. The most easily recognizable feature of the gorgon is the ring of fleshy tendrils, each 45–60 centimeters long, that project from the crown of its skull, tipped by pendulous knobs of flesh.

Gorgons are predacious hunters, often rampaging against oil tankers from the Middle East, small fishing boats, and in some cases fishing villages with emergency diesel-fueled power generators or gasoline-powered cars. When attacking on the surface, gorgons prefer to use their Weather Control power to cause rain. They show no fear of metahumans—indeed, they seem to prefer preying on them.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
11	6	6	20	3	5	2	8	4	6	8	11	2

Movement: 15/50 (30/60 swimming)

Skills: Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Elemental Attack) 6, Perception 6, Stealth group 6, Swimming 6, Unarmed Combat 6

Powers: Dual Natured, Elemental Attack (Electricity), Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Hardened Armor (6), Mystic Armor (6), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: 8P, AP -2), Noxious

GORGON VENOM

Vector: Contact

Speed: 1 Combat Turn

Penetration: -2

Power: 8

Effect: Petrification, Physical Damage

Gorgon venom quickly calcifies its victims, starting with the outer layers of exposed tissue and working down toward vital organs. For every box of damage dealt by the venom, the target takes a temporary -1 to Agility and Reaction. When a target's Agility and Reaction are both reduced to zero, the target is covered in stone and need no longer make Toxin Resistance Tests against the venom, as there is no exposed flesh for it to make contact with; however, the target also loses contact with outside air (Holding Your Breath, p. 137, SR4A).

A victim encased in stone has an Armor rating of 4.

Breath, Paralyzing Touch, Petrification, Venom, Weather Control

Optional Powers: Dragonspeech, Sapience

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Petroleum)

Notes: Gorgons with the Sapience power also have the Magician or Mystic Adept quality. Gorgons have +2 Reach.

HYDRA

Hydras ploycaput

The hydra is one of the very few polyecephalous animals in the Sixth World, and it can sport seven or nine heads. Their bodies are large and squat, commonly massing around 1.4 metric tons, and their heavy scales vary from a mottled olive-green to a green-gray, often with a paler belly and forming heavy blue-black or blue-green bony plates. The necks emerge from the torso, each ending in a small head—the flattened, crested skulls contain little more than sensory organs and a complex of nerve ganglia. The hydra's central neural complex resides in its trunk at the base of the spine, and a secondary neural complex in the solar plexus controls its autonomic functions.

Almost exclusive to Greece, the hydra is solitary, dwelling in or near substantial freshwater pools or lakes. They are rarely aggressive except when hungry, frightened, disturbed, or in the presence of other dracoforms—dragons are known to be very aggressive towards hydras, and only the effort of conservationists keeps the species from extinction. Still, hydras require large territories to sustain themselves, and they have been known to prey on cows and metahumans that they can catch.

An aquatic version of the hydra, the hydra-wyrm, also exists. This species possesses gills and paddle-like webbed hind limbs that allow it to move well through the water but only ponderously on land, in a manner similar to a walrus.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
12	4	4	30	1	6	3	6	5	6	8	10	2

Movement: 10/30 (5/15 and 15/30 swimming for hydra-wyrm)
Skills: Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Perception 6, Swimming 6, Unarmed Combat 6

Powers: Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Hardened Armor (6), Mystic Armor (6), Natural Weapon (Bite: 10P, AP -2)

Optional Powers: Dragonspeech, Elemental Attack (Fire), Fear, Regeneration, Sapience, Venom (Added Effect: Disorientation, until damage healed)

Notes: Hydras with the Sapience power will also have the Adept, Magician, or Mystic Adept quality. Hydras have +4 Reach. With a single Complex Action, each of a hydra's heads can make a melee attack. The hydra's dice pool is not split between each attack, and each attack is handled separately. No more than four heads can attack the same target. The hydra can benefit from the "Friends in Melee" modifier (Multiple Opponents and Friends in Melee, p. 157, SR4A) if two or more of its heads attack the same target, and a single melee attack can have multiple targets (Multiple Targets, p. 158, SR4A).

ICEDRAKON

Neovaranus articus

A distant relative to dragons, icedraka are 1.5-meter-long wingless dracoforms that are strongly reminiscent of western dragons and drakes with white and grey, blue-tinged scales. Icedraka prefer subarctic and arctic environments, though rare colonies exist in Welsh Dragon Lands and snow-capped mountain valleys. They are patient and stealthy hunters, often burrowing into snowdrifts with only their nostrils uncovered, waiting for prey. Icedraka live in small family groups of up to six adults that are led by a dominant male. Younger males will eventually challenge the patriarch, which normally leads to a fight to the death. Like fire-draka, icedraka may be used by dragons as a paranormal security critter, but they are somewhat rarer.

Icedraka and fire-draka sometimes inhabit the same territories, most notably on Kamchatka Island, Thule, and in certain zoos and parasecurity habitats where housing space becomes an issue. Such rare cohabitation can and does lead to cross-breeding between the two species. Most offspring generally show a mixture of both parents' appearances but express the paranormal abilities of only the mother. Rarely, however, a novadrakon is born with gestalt abilities; these draka almost always become matriarchs or patriarchs of their group.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	4	4	4	2	4	4	3	4	6	6	8	2

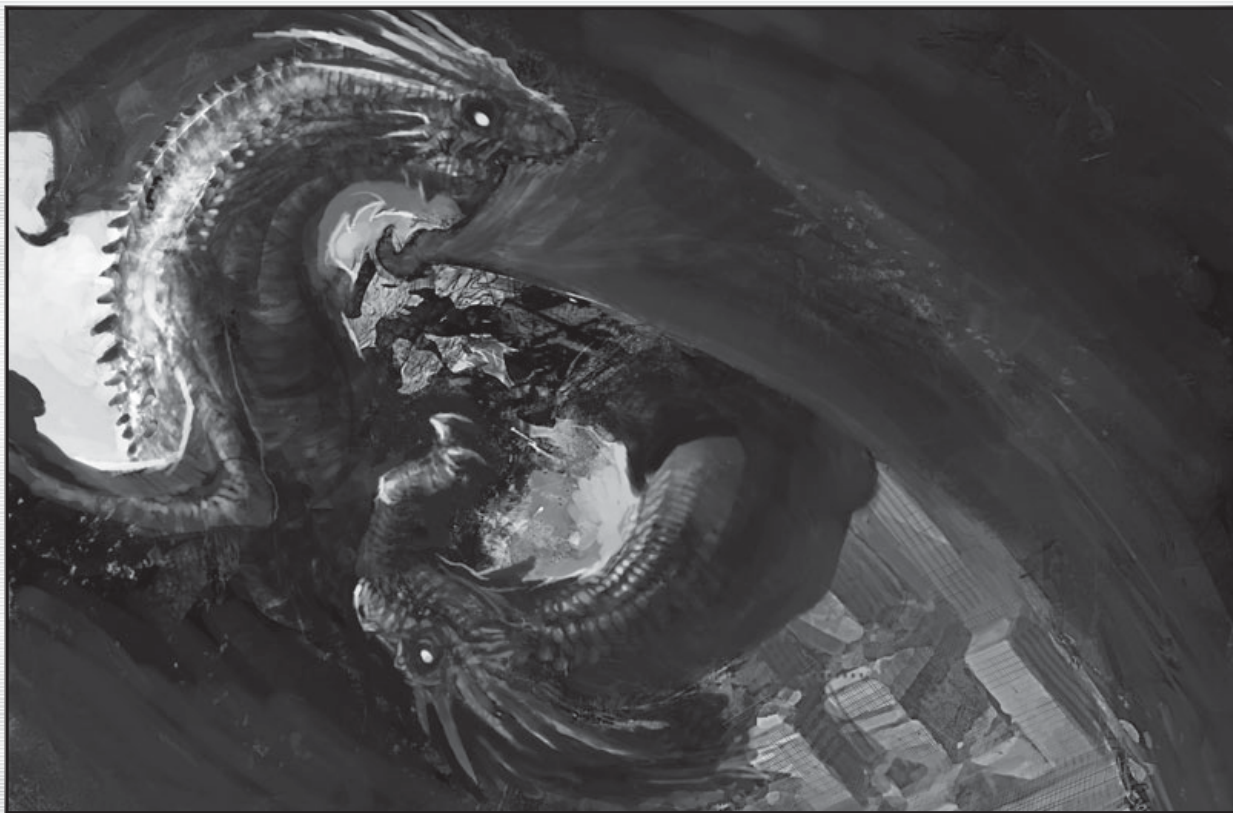
Movement: 15/50

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 5, Perception 5, Stealth group 5, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Dual Natured, Energy Aura (Cold), Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Hardened Armor (4), Immunity (Cold), Mystic Armor (4), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: 4P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Fire, Mild)

Note: Novadraka are identical to icedraka, but they also possess the Energy Aura (Fire) and Immunity (Fire) powers and lack the icedrakon's Allergy (Fire).



INCOMING FEED.....



LINDWORM

Neoophidae magus

Lindworms, known variously as dreki, aitavaras, grandfather snakes, and great anacondas, are large Awakened serpents that can be found in any temperate or tropical climate. These dracomorphs have a distinctive “third eye” structure in the center of their foreheads—though whether this structure is actually photosensitive remains a matter of some debate. Their scales are small, soft, and very fine compared to other dracomorphs, and they vary from green to slate grey and olive brown. Mature specimens are eight meters long, but lindworms continue to shed their skin and grow throughout their lives, and the oldest lindworms are said to be twenty-five meters long or longer, and able to constrict their prey. Unlike nagas, to whom they are distantly related, lindworms do not have the vocal apparatus to speak directly with metahumans. Like Eastern dragons, lindworms are capable of flight despite the absence of wings.

Considerably rarer than other dracomorphs and unable to easily communicate with metahumanity and most other non-metahuman sapients, lindworms remain on the outskirts of civilization. Many cultures, such as Amazonia and the druidic cults of Great Britain, make no distinction between lindworms and dracoforms or mistakenly identify the limbless serpents as another breed of dragon. For their part, lindworms seem to deal with dragons and great dragons as go-betweens and vassals for these powerful dracoforms, perhaps in exchange for teaching lindworms how to communicate using Dragonspeech.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	6	6	8	5	4	6	5	5	6	7	10	2

Movement: 20/60 (30/60 flight)

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 6, Counterspelling 6, Flight 5, Perception 6, Stealth group 6, Swimming 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Animal Control (Domesticated Animals, Reptiles), Compulsion, Concealment (Self), Dual Natured, Empathy, Immunity (Normal Weapons), Magical Guard (Self), Natural Weapon (Bite: 6P, AP -1), Sapience, Venom

Optional Powers: Dragonspeech

Note: Lindworms always have the Mystic Adept quality. Lindworms have +1 Reach.

ELDER LINDWORMS

As lindworms get older, they undergo a subtle metamorphosis, becoming ever longer with thicker scales, a distinctly draconic head, and a pair of legs that allow bipedal motion. In this manner, they greatly resemble a wingless wyvern or feathered serpent. Depending on how much time they have spent around dragons of a particular species, elder lindworms might develop other characteristics mimicking dragons, such as a coat of multicolored feathers, golden whiskers, or prominent horns.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
+10	+1	+1	+10	+2	+3	+3	+4	6	6	9	+4	+2

Movement: x 1.5

Skills: Conjuring group 6, Enchanting 6, Sorcery group 6

Additional Innate Powers: Dragonspeech, Engulf, Hardened Armor (12), Metahuman Form, Mystic Armor (12)

Optional Powers: Influence, Innate Spells (any Health spells), Noxious Breath

Note: Elder lindworms always have the Mystic Adept quality. The elder lindworm's Engulf power represents when it crushes a victim in its coils.

SEADRAKON

Neovaranus oceanus

Closely related to firedraka and icedraka, the seadrakon is a grey-green aquatic dracoform with paddle-like limbs. It can grow from 1.3 to 13 meters long—the larger specimens are sometimes mistaken for sea serpents or leviathans, but they can be differentiated by their short necks. Seadraka may be found in any ocean, and they are known to dive very deep. Despite this, seadraka do not have gills, and they must come up for air at least every twenty minutes.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	4	5	4	2	3	2	3	4	6	6	8	2

Movement: 30/60 swimming

Skills: Assensing 5, Astral Combat 5, Perception 5, Stealth group 5, Swimming 6, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Hardened Armor (4), Immunity (Cold), Movement (Self), Mystic Armor (4), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: 4P, AP 0)

SEA SERPENT

Draco aquaticus minor

Sea serpents are some of the most common dracoforms, found in many large freshwater lakes as well as oceans. Strongly reminiscent of plesiosaurs with their long, serpentine necks and paddle-limbs adapted for swimming, sea serpents differ in several important respects. An innate ability of sea serpents to support their bulk even when mostly removed from water is similar to the ability of other dracoforms to fly. Sea serpents come in a variety of colors, from pale grey to a dark blue-black with green mottling. Sea serpents are air breathers that are capable of holding their breaths for up to three hours at a time.

Freshwater sea serpents, which dwell in inland lakes or river deltas, are herbivorous and rarely longer than 18 meters. They are not usually aggressive unless someone threatens their eggs or young. Apparently due to the limited constraints of the lake environment, female sea serpents lay only a single egg every other year, which helps keep the population low but stable—some experts have even seen females lay more eggs if aggressive predation takes its toll on the pod. The most well-known freshwater sea serpents are the pod that dwells in Scotland's Loch Ness.

Saltwater sea serpents, by contrast, may grow up to 25 meters long. They are highly aggressive, often attacking small whales and dolphins, and their females lay up to twenty eggs every year.

However, the violent lives of saltwater sea serpents also ensure that few of the young survive, keeping the population relatively stable.

Despite the distinction in size and habits, the two subspecies can operate equally well in fresh or salt water. Indeed, it has been known for both kinds of sea serpents to travel from ocean to lake or lake to ocean in search of a mate.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
12	4	4	18	3	4	3	5	4	6	6	8	2

Movement: 30/75 swimming

Skills: Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Perception 6, Stealth group 6, Swimming 6, Unarmed Combat 6

Powers: Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Hardened Armor (6), Movement (Self), Mystic Armor (6), Natural Weapon (Bite: 8P, AP -1), Venom

Optional Powers: Dragonspeech, Elemental Attack (Water or Sound), Sapience

Notes: Sea Serpents with the Sapience power also have the Magician quality. Sea Serpents have +1 Reach.

WYVERN

Aleutoserpens pili melior

Wyverns are highly aggressive dracoforms resembling little more than a denuded feathered serpent that is up to 15 meters long and typically dark brown in color. A wyvern's skull is much more sharply sloped than a dragon's, and the wyvern has been shown to have significantly less brain mass. A wyvern's tail contains a poisonous stinger similar to those found in feathered serpents. While wyverns are assumed like other dracoforms to be oviparous, no eggs have ever been found or mating behavior observed.

Most wyverns dwell in desolate locations far from metahumanity, where there are plenty of perches to wait and spot prey. Once the prey is in sight, the wyvern dives down on it, picks up velocity and swoops off with it (if small enough for the wyvern to grasp and carry) or slashes into it with its clawed hind limbs, and then (if the animal is still alive) stabs with its stinger and injects its venom. Rarely, these solitary dracoforms will gather in packs to tackle large prey such as a roc or dragon.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
9	4	4	16	3	4	4	4	5	6	6	8	2

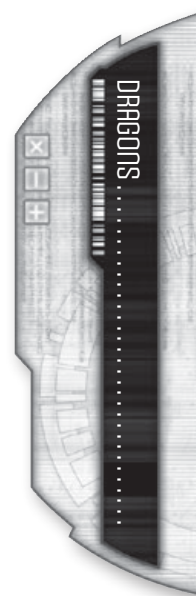
Movement: 15/50 (30/100 flight)

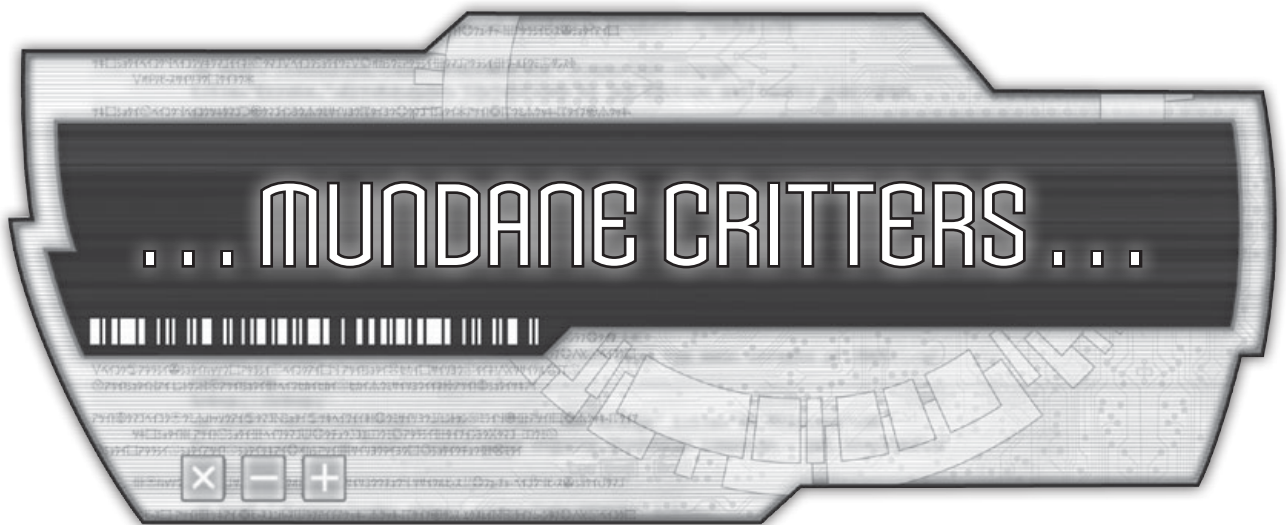
Skills: Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Dodge 3, Flight 6, Perception 6, Stealth group 6, Unarmed Combat 6

Powers: Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (Enhanced Smell, Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Fear, Hardened Armor (6), Immunity (Poisons), Mystic Armor (6), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite/Stinger: 8P, AP -2), Venom

Optional Powers: Dragonspeech, Elemental Attack (Fire), Sapience

Notes: Wyverns with the Sapience power also have the Magician quality. Wyverns have +1 Reach.





Two men plodded through the slush that remained from the morning's storm. They'd concealed their arrival from any drones or sensors under the morning's cloud cover, but the geothermal properties of the area had transformed the taiga into a warm marshland. The occasional crunch from crusty snow sharply contrasted with the endless squelching sounds.

"You don't stand a chance," Windwalker barked confidently. Featherbone smiled and kept silent. The rabbit foot on the end of his long braid swung wildly as Windwalker stepped forward to block Featherbone's progress.

He attempted to fix Featherbone with a glare as he asked, "How come you're so calm all the time?"

Featherbone sidestepped and bumped Windwalker. Featherbone's tortoise-shell shoulder plates clanked together from the impact. Windwalker let loose a grunt of frustration, then said, "Whatever! I'll see you at the lab, and you can send me the 5K when you catch up."

Featherbone smirked, checked his GPS, and continued along the path he'd plotted towards the lab.

Windwalker checked his compass and set off at a quick lope on a beeline through the undergrowth towards the enclave. Featherbone watched him go, shook his head, and continued along the path. His shades projected the planned path in AR as well as the names of the species detected by the nature guide agent he had running. A half hour later, he paused on a hill and found Windwalker's compass and a footprint in bear shit. "Lost?" he sent as he admired the ptarmigans crossing his projected path.

"Stupid nature," came the reply.

An hour later, Featherbone saw birds burst forth from the woods ahead. He squatted in monkey flowers and butterwort to pull his pistol. A moment later, Featherbone got a message on his commlink. "I'll still win," it said.

Featherbone smirked and continued on. The landscape became wetter as he closed in on his destination. The well-known Liard Hot Springs surrounded the lab. Featherbone circled the larger lakes to where he figured there would be less security. As he moved quietly, he saw Windwalker swimming lazily in the springs. The shaman was oblivious to Featherbone's observation. Featherbone also noticed that Windwalker was not swimming towards the lab but was lost in the low fog. He took advantage of this and moved quickly ahead along a drier path.

Featherbone grinned as he pondered how he'd spend the extra 5,000 nuyen for winning the bet. He reached the perimeter of the lab—bordered by a thermal pool—and waded onto the foggy marsh. Waist-deep in the water, Featherbone moved with some debris as camouflage when he spotted a flicker on his commlink. For just a moment, a raccoon ARO popped up and flipped him the bird.

His shoulders slouched as he sent, "Damn you, Mika!"

Moral of the story: while the tortoise beats the hare, the raccoon steals the prize.



MUNDANE CRITTERS

Posted by Ecotope

Normal animals are just that: normal. They don't run corporations, they don't mobilize for a revolution, and they certainly don't care how a person makes a living. While pollution has wiped more of them off the face of the earth, they still follow basic instincts to survive:

- **Food:** Most domestics are dependent on their metahuman owner for food. Those in the wild either forage for their meals or become another's meal. Metahumans generate a lot of waste that scavengers can pick and choose from for scraps. Herbivores dwell outside of cities where greenery isn't limited to AR. Carnivores don't care where and what they eat as long as it's slower than them. It's a gomatia-cats-devil rat kind of world.
- **Shelter:** All animals have some sort of territory that they will defend if they see a threat, whether it's a nest, a metahuman home, or several square kilometers of woods. Within that space they have a nest, den, or bed to keep them out of the elements as much as possible. If their shelter isn't sufficient to meet their instinctive territorial requirements, they tend to develop repetitive stress-related habits. The most common cases are animals pacing in cages that are too small. Without shelter, they will get sick.
- **Reproduction:** Except for some invertebrates, animals need the opposite sex to perpetuate the species. Even solitary animals congregate during a breeding period. Most domestics don't experience this drive, as they've been surgically neutered or genetically modified to prevent fertility before delivery.
- **Society:** Many species have social requirements. Domestics often adopt the metahuman as part of that social clique; someone to play with, eat with, or just provide companionship. Without some social interaction, an animal can go through stress and depression similar to a metahuman, and eventually die.

- Four Legs Good! Two Legs Bad!
- NetCat

Animals that we deal with in our daily urban lives are domesticated companions or vermin. Only rarely would a person meet a cow before it became hamburger (or meet a real hamburger for that matter) or encounter a cheery woodland creature unless they'd left the confines of the city for nefarious purposes. Vermin have thrived in the 2070s with large areas of urban blight in which to proliferate and feed. They find the most seemingly secure hiding places for sugary snacks and greasy chips, all for the low price of nothing. They also leave presents around the house or apartment, spreading disease all the while.

What is legal as a pet varies from country to country. California Free State does not allow transgenic pets, nor does it allow the transport of animals from the weasel or rodent family due to health concerns. PCC and Sioux allow wolf hybrids and hawks with proper licensing. CAS will not allow any transport of birds without a border quarantine of two weeks, also due to pandemic health concerns. UCAS has different licensing regulations than the CAS, etc. This makes living in Denver with pets both difficult and potentially lucrative.

Farm animals (cows, pigs, chickens) are strictly regulated and tagged. They have value as commodities, and shipping them is highly regulated, even banned, along some borders since the hell-cow incident in 2061. As an example, no corporation involved in

bovines is going to allow any cow shipped from or through India into the herd because of the possibility of hellcow. The same is true with British beef but for different reasons. Those shipped are quarantined several times as well as sterilized and tested before being moved.

Metahumans are still on top of the food chain, so unless normal animals are very hungry or someone's small enough to not be considered a threat, they are not on their menu. Other than that, animals attack only if they feel threatened (e.g., an animal being cornered or attacked, or a mother defending her young). What they think is a threat is not the same as what a metahuman considers a threat. A smile is considered a baring of teeth, standing with arms raised is considered a challenge to a bear, and so forth. When they do attack, it's direct and obvious that they want to hurt their target. While one bee might be nothing, a swarm of them is something to worry about. Only a few larger species cooperate in combat, such as wolves and chimps. Those kinds of attacks are the most dangerous, as while a person defends his head against one animal, another is going for the groin. Regardless, animals don't continue attacking if badly injured and able to flee. Unlike metahumans, animals behave as if living were more important than winning.

AQUATIC

Two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered in water. Water also sustains life in the form of rain falling from clouds into rivers and then flowing into the sea. From the Amazon and Mississippi to the Great Barrier Reef, life abounds in the water.

CEPHALOPODS

Cephalopods are mollusks with prominent heads and long arms. There are three subclasses of cephalopods: cuttlefish, octopus, and squid.

Octopus

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	3	2	3	1	3	4	3	0	6	5	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/25 (swimming)

Skills: Escape Artist 3, Perception 3, Swimming 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Gills, Substance Extrusion (Ink)

Note: +2 Reach

Similar Animals: Squid

Giant Squid (North Pacific Giant Octopus): Body 5, Strength 8, Reach +3

Cuttlefish: Body 0, Strength 1, +1 Reach

Trivia-Verse

Octopi are boneless, and they can squeeze into cracks and holes as small as their beak; the only hard thing in their body.

JELLYFISH

Jellyfish is an all-encompassing term for gelatinous zooplankton. Jellyfish usually have an umbrella-shaped, gelatinous body and trailing tentacles.

MAN O' WAR VENOM

Vector: Contact

Speed: 1 Combat Turn

Penetration: 0

Power: 3

Effect: Physical Damage

The man o' war's stingers are clustered together and very small, easily allowing penetration into the skin. Touching a tentacle leaves a red rash from release of toxin into the skin. Some people have a severe painful reaction to jellyfish that can trigger anaphylactic shock.

Box Jellyfish

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	6	2	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 1/1 (swimming)

Skills: Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Gills, Venom

Similar Animals: Portuguese Man O' War

MARINE MAMMALS

Some land mammals have returned to the oceans. While they lost their legs in exchange for flippers and fins, they still have the same gymnastic grace.

Bottlenose Dolphin

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
8	5	5	8	3	4	4	4	0	6	9	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 20/80 (swimming)

Skills: Diving 2, Gymnastics 4, Perception 3, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Sonar)

Similar Animals: Pilot Whale, Porpoise, River Dolphin

Orca: Body 12, Strength 11, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 6P, AP 0), Unarmed Combat 3

Trivia-Verse

The blue whale is the largest animal, weighing up to 200 tons.

The fin whale uses its powerful tail flukes to defend against sharks and other whales. It also used them to smash early whaling boats.

The sperm whale has the largest brain, weighing in at 10 kilograms.

Elephant Seal: Body 9, Strength 6, Armor (1/2)

Right: Body 20, Strength 20, Speed 10/20

Walrus: Body 8, Strength 6, Natural Weapon (Tusk: DV 4P, AP 0)

Penguin

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	2	0	1	2	2	1	1	6	4	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/30 (swimming)

Skills: Swimming 3, Perception 2

Weaknesses: Fragile 2

Sea Lion

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
7	5	4	6	3	4	3	4	0	6	8	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/30 (swimming)

Skills: Diving 2, Gymnastics 3, Perception 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Seal: Body 5, Gymnastics 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0)

Sea Otter: Body 1, Strength 2, Fragile 1, Unarmed Combat 1, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0)

Trivia-Verse

Sea lions are quick and agile in the water, and they can leap up to 4 meters out of the water. They have been trained as aquatic security dogs to detain divers or pull people from boats.

Trivia-Verse

Strange things have been noted in the oceans in recent years. Drones and networked buoys have been mysteriously hacked. It is rumored that dolphins have learned or have been taught a new trick.

Blue Whale

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
24	4	4	25	2	3	3	5	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Rare

Movement: 20/30 (swimming)

Skills: Diving 2, Perception 2, Swimming 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Armor (2/4), Enhanced Senses (Sonar)

Similar Animals: Bowhead (Fin, Grey, Humpback): Body 20, Strength 23

Narwhal (Beaked Whale, Bottlenose Whale): Body 11, Strength 12, Armor (1/2)

PREDATORY FISH

Electric Eel

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	2	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	6	3	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/20 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 2, Infiltration 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Gills, Enhanced Senses (Electrolocation), Natural Weapon (Electric Shock: DV 3P, AP 0)

Note: The electric eel's shock has a range of 3 meters, and is resisted by half impact armor.

Aetherpedia Query: Electrolocation

The biological ability to perceive electrical impulses, including those from living creatures.

Piranha

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	4	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	6	3	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/20 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Gestalt Consciousness, Gills, Natural Weapon (Bite DV 2P, AP 0)

Barracuda

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	6	4	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 20/60 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Gills, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Moray Eel: Swimming 3, Unarmed Combat 2, Movement 10/20 (swimming)

SHARKS

Sharks are a type of fish with a streamlined body and cartilage skeleton. They also have several sets of teeth and dermal denticles that cover their skin.

Aetherpedia Query: Denticles

Body structure similar to teeth found on the outside of the skin.

Great White

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
10	5	5	10	1	4	1	3	0	6	9	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 20/50 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Gills, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 7P, AP 1)

Similar Animals: Hammerhead (Mako, Tiger Shark): Body 7, Strength 7, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0)

Pike (Salmon Shark): Body 1, Strength 1, Natural Weapon (Bite DV 2P, AP 0)

Manta Ray

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
10	4	4	6	2	3	2	3	2	6	7	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/20 (swimming)

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 2, Swimming 2

Powers: Gills

Similar Animals: Mega Mouth Shark, Whale Shark
Sturgeon: Body 6, Strength 5

Trivia-Verse

Manta rays are the largest rays, with a width of 7.6 meters, and they have the largest brain-to-body ratio for any ray or shark. This gives them a theoretical advantage as a rigged biodrone platform.

AQUATIC VERMIN

This category includes many small bony fish that live in both freshwater and oceans.

Goldfish

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	1	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 1/1 (swimming)

Skills: Swimming 1

Powers: Gills

Similar Animals: Any small pet store fish, Betas, Sardines

Conger (Freshwater Eel): Agility 2, Intuition 2, Initiative 3

Salmon (Trout): Swimming 2, Agility 1

TERRESTRIAL

Equal to the ocean in variety, land animals have adapted to live in virtually every space on or under the surface. From the highest tree to the deepest cave, terrestrial animals come in all shapes and sizes.

APEX PREDATORS

These animals are the top of the food chain. With the exception of metahumans, they have no equal and fear no predators.

Alligator

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
7	4	4	7	1	3	2	2	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/35

Skills: Perception 3, Infiltration 2, Shadowing 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite DV 6P, AP -2), Enhanced Senses (Smell)

Similar Animals: Crocodile

Komodo Dragon: Venom

Alligator Turtle (Caiman): Body 5, Strength 5

Monitor Lizard: Body 2, Strength 2, Venom

Trivia-Verse

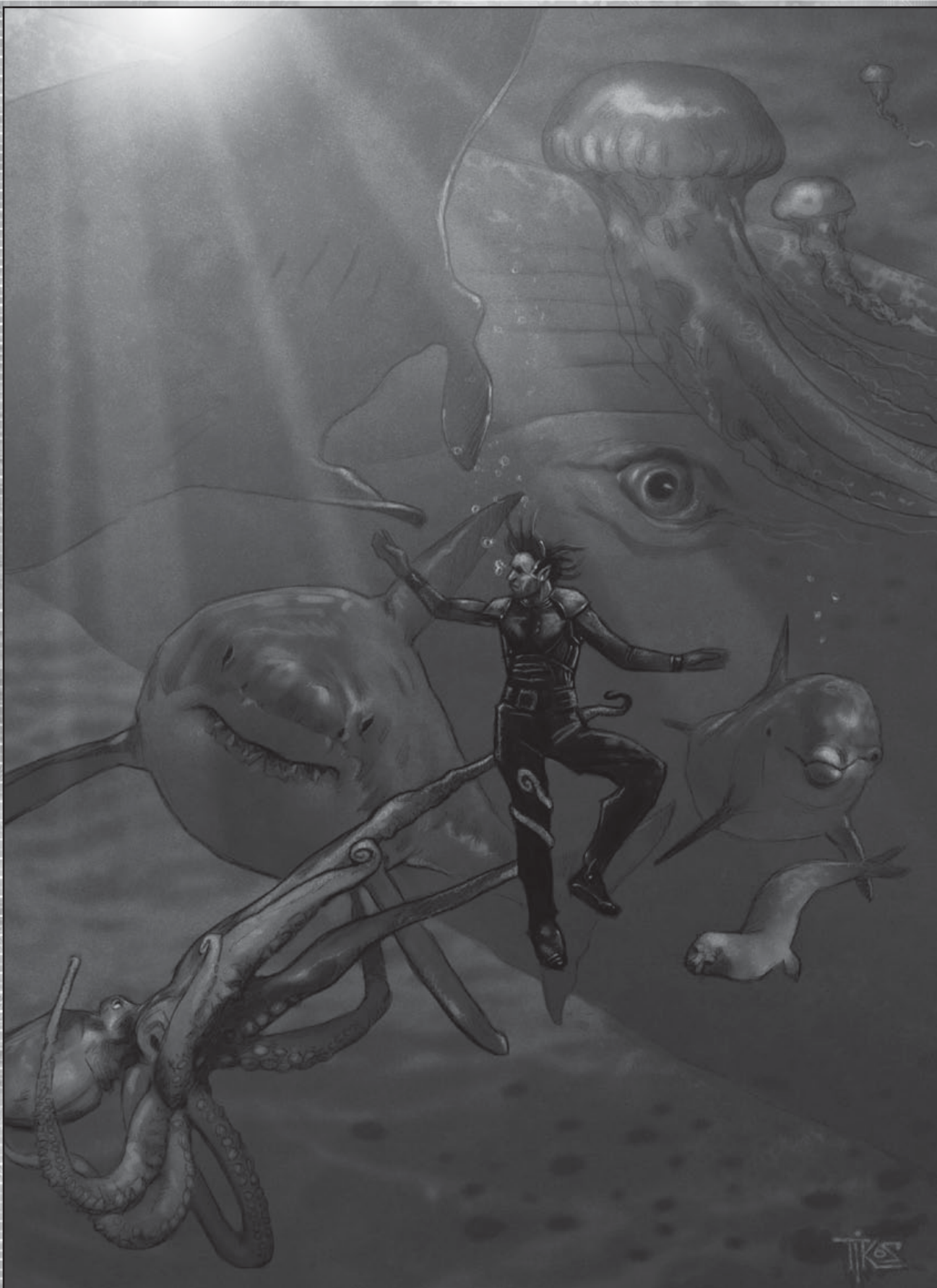
The Voudoun community in the UCAS has petitioned the government several times to protect the alligator and establish more sanctuaries. They also set up magical traps and lures to protect alligators.

Boar

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
5	4	4	5	1	3	2	2	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/40



KOMODO DRAGON VENOM

Vector: Injection

Speed: 1 Hour

Penetration: -2

Power: 8

Effect: Physical Damage, Nausea, Septicemia (See Below)

After a bite from a komodo dragon, the bacteria in its saliva multiply and move along the bloodstream of the victim. The resulting infection begins with a fever and can end with organ failure or death. The only way to treat a bite is with antibiotics. Without antibiotics, victims will continue to take damage every hour. If the victim glitches in resisting damage, increase the power by 2; on a critical glitch, increase the power by 4 until the bite is treated.

MONITOR LIZARD VENOM

Vector: Injection

Speed: 1 Hour

Penetration: 0

Power: 6

Effect: Physical Damage

The bite of the monitor lizard is painful but also venomous. The venom induces rapid swelling and shooting pains as it moves through the bloodstream.

Skills: Perception 2, Running 1, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite/Tusk: DV 3P, AP 0), Enhanced Senses (Smell)

Similar Animals: Feral Pig, Warthog

Cheetah

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
5	5	4	4	3	3	2	3	0	6	7	2

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/80

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Running 4, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 5P, AP 0)

Grizzly Bear

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
9	4	4	9	3	3	2	3	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/45

Skills: Climbing 2, Intimidation 2, Perception 3, Running 2, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 5P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Kodiak Bear

Black Bear (Asian, Sun): Body 8, Strength 8

Panda Bear: Body 8, Strength 8, Dietary Requirement (Bamboo)

CANINES

Canines have been "man's best friend" since metahumans were primitive hunters. Canines, specifically domestic dogs, have played a basic support role for thousands of years. They've even travelled into space and the depths of the ocean with metahumanity.

African Wild Dog

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 10/50

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Jackal

Coyote: Edge 5

Wolf Hybrid (including breeds such as Malamute, Husky, and Wolfhound): Intimidation 2, Logic 1

Hyena: Body 3, Strength 3, Enhanced Senses (Low Light)

Medium and Small Domestic Dog

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	3	1	3	3	1	3	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 10/45

Skills: Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell)

Weaknesses: Fragile 1

Note: Reach -1

Similar Animals: Medium and small breeds (Poodle, Terrier, Dachshund, Beagle, etc.)

Trivia-Verse

Chihuahuas were the first breed of native domestic dog in North America. They are believed to be the descendants of the Techichi, a dog that was favored by the Toltecs and considered a symbol of the upper class by the Aztecs. Because of this, Aztechnology has reengineered the Techichi breed.

Techichi are available only in Aztlan, and they are strictly controlled.

LARGE HERBIVORES

While slightly smaller than megafauna, large herbivores are next in line on the food chain. Between predators and loss of habitat, their numbers have declined considerably.

Antelope

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
4	3	4	3	1	3	2	2	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 25/100

Skills: Perception 2, Running 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Horns: DV 4P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Gazelle, White-Tailed Deer

GENETIC ENHANCEMENTS FOR PETS

Flore-Pet

Fluorescence allows a pet to glow when the appropriate light is shined upon it. Fluorescent pink, blue, red, and green colors are available.

Hypo-Allergenic

With some enhancements, shedding and dandruff of the pet are greatly reduced. For severe allergies, the skin proteins are slightly altered to avoid the allergic reaction.

Luci-Pet

Using luciferin, pets can now generate their own soft glowing light. Yellow, blue, and green colors are available.

Munchkin

Growth is hindered, allowing for miniature or dwarf versions of a breed. This enhancement averages a 30-50 percent reduction in size depending on species and breed.

Enhancement	Availability	Cost
Flore-Pet	+2	800¥
Hypo-Allergenic	+2	1,200¥
Luci-Pet	+2	1,000¥
Munchkin	+1	500¥

Moose

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
11	3	4	9	1	3	2	3	1	6	7	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 20/50

Skills: Perception 2, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Horns: DV 5P, AP 0)

Note: +1 Reach

Similar Animals: North American Elk

Trivia-Verse

Moose and wooly mammoths have been used for domestic service and security patrols in the Pechora-Ilych Nature Reserve.

Zebra

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
8	5	5	7	3	3	1	2	0	6	8	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 20/100

Skills: Perception 2, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Similar Animals: Okapi: Body 4, Strength 4

LARGE VERMIN

These animals are generally considered pests in urban environments, though they may also be found in rural areas. Ranging in size from under 100 grams to over 1 kilogram in mass and from 15 to 60 centimeters in length, these animals have spread along with man to every corner of the earth and into space.

Norwegian Rat

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	3	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	6	3	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 5/15

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Gestalt Consciousness

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals: Chinchilla, Giant Pouch Rat, Guinea Pig, Hedgehog, Marmot, Muskrat

Opossum: Climbing 4, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Allergy (Sunlight)

Trivia-Verse

In 2059, luciferase-enhanced hamsters and gerbils surpassed children's nightlights in sales.

Hamster

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	6	2	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 5/10

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell)

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals: Degas, Gerbil, Mouse, Naked Mole Rat, Polynesian Rat

Chipmunk (Squirrel): Agility 4, Edge 2, Climbing 5

Mole: Enhanced Senses (Touch)

Prairie Dog: Strength 1

Trivia-Verse

Squirrels eat foods that are rich in protein, such as nuts and seeds. Since the proliferation of soy products in the metahuman diet, they have become a considerable nuisance to sanitation. They love soy and will raid trash cans for it. They then stuff their food into nooks of trees or under rocks, littering and damaging the environment.

MEGAFAUNA

Mega fauna include the largest mundane animals on land. While not in direct competition with people, their need for space came into conflict with mankind's expansion. These giants have generally lost that battle, as metahumans have encroached on their lands. Today, they are much more commonly found in zoos than in the wild.

Elephant

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
12	4	3	16	1	3	3	3	1	6	6	1

Frequency: Rare

Movement: 25/45

Skills: Clubs 3, Perception 3, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Tusk: DV 12P, AP -2)

Note: +2 Reach

Trivia-Verse

Of the five subspecies, only the Indian and white elephant still exist in the wild. Their breeding populations are estimated at fewer than 5,000.

Giraffe

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
12	2	2	9	1	1	1	1	1	6	3	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/50

Skills: Perception 2, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Note: +2 Reach

Hippopotamus

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
12	4	4	16	2	2	2	5	2	6	6	1

Frequency: Rare

Movement: 15/45 (5/10 swimming)

Skills: Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 4, Swimming 2, Running 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 9P AP -2)

Trivia-Verse

Hippos are among the most aggressive and dangerous animals in the world. Although herbivores, they are ill-tempered and will attack boats, metahumans, and anything else that intrudes upon their territory.

Rhinoceros

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
12	3	4	16	2	2	2	2	2	6	6	1

Frequency: Extremely Rare

Movement: 15/50

Skills: Perception 2, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (2/4), Natural Weapon (Horn: DV 10P, AP -2)

LARGE DOMESTICS

These animals are domesticated creatures used by metahumanity as beasts of burden, food, and even clothing. Some have lost their wild traits in exchange for traits that metahumans carefully selected.

Domestic Cow

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
8	3	3	8	1	1	1	1	0	6	4	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 15/30

Skills: Perception 2, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Bison

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
9	3	3	8	1	2	1	2	0	6	5	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/40

Skills: Perception 2, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Similar Animals: Eland, Musk Ox, Water Buffalo, Yak

Camel

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
8	5	5	8	3	3	1	2	0	6	8	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 20/80

Skills: Perception 2, Running 3, Swimming 1

Similar Animals: Llama (Alpaca): Body 7, Strength 7

Burro (Donkey, Mule): Body 6, Strength 7

PRIMATES

Primates include the closest genetic relatives to metahumans. Lemurs, new and old world monkeys, and apes all fall into this category.

Baboon

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
4	4	5	4	2	3	4	3	1	6	8	1

Frequency: Rare

Movement: 15/30

Skills: Athletics skill group 3, Clubs 2, Perception 3, Thrown Weapons 1, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Chimpanzee, Orangutan

Gibbon: Body 2, Strength 2, +1 Reach

Gorilla: Body 6, Strength 5, +1 Reach

Trivia-Verse

Chimpanzees can make tools, interact in sophisticated social groups, understand sign language, display altruistic behavior, and even laugh. Despite all of this, they are not recognized or given rights as a sapient species.

Green Monkey

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	4	3	2	2	3	3	2	1	6	6	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/20

Skills: Athletics skill group 3, Clubs 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 3, Thrown Weapons 1

Similar Animals: Lemur, Macaque, Mangabe, Colobus

Marmoset (Squirrel Monkey, Surili): Fragile 2

Mouse Lemur

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	1	2	0	3	2	1	1	0	6	4	1

Frequency: Rare

Movement: 5/10

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2

Similar Animals: Pygmy Marmoset, Tarsier

Loris: Venom (Loris Venom)

LORIS VENOM

Vector: Ingestion, Injection

Speed: Immediate

Penetration: 0

Power: 7

Effect: Nausea

Lorises cover their babies with this venom to deter predators, and they put some venom in their mouths to deliver a poisonous bite. The venom causes swelling and nausea. They carry their venom sack in their elbow.

SMALL HERBIVORES

Filling in niches that large herbivores and megafauna can't inhabit and providing a treat to predators are the small herbivores. They can range in weight from a few kilos to 50 kg. Small herbivores feel less stress from urban encroachment, as they can survive in smaller territories.

Aardvark

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	3	1	3	3	2	2	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Weaknesses: Fragile 1

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals: Echidna, Koala, Wombat

Armadillo (Box Turtle): Armor (0/2)

Platypus: Swimming 2, Venom (Platypus Venom)

Porcupine: Natural Weapon (Quill: DV 3P, AP -2)

Rabbit: Fragile 2, Willpower 2

Skunk: Substance Extrusion (Skunk Fluid)

Sloth: Agility 1, Reaction 1, Initiative 4

Trivia-Verse

The reason antlers are rarely found in the woods is because porcupines eat them.

Beaver

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	3	1	2	3	2	3	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/20

Skills: Perception 2, Swimming 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Trivia-Verse

The tarsier is the smallest primate in the world. It can be found on Southeast Asian islands. Tarsiers are 15 cm tall and have enormous eyeballs compared to their size (16 mm in diameter). The pygmy marmoset comes in at a close second, though it is still considered the smallest true monkey. The loris comes in third at 30 cm in height.

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Fragile 1

Similar Animals: Nutria

Domestic Pig

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
4	3	3	3	1	3	2	2	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 10/30

Skills: Perception 2, Running 1, Tracking 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell)

Similar Animals: Potbelly

Kangaroo

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	4	4	4	2	3	1	3	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 30/100

Skills: Gymnastics 3, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Natural Weapon (Claw: DV 4P, AP 0)

PLATYPUS VENOM

Vector: Injection

Speed: 1 Combat Turn

Penetration: 0

Power: 5

Effect: Physical Damage

The platypus has spurs on its ankles which can deliver venom. It's not deadly, but it causes edema or a painful fluid buildup around the struck area.

Ostrich

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
3	3	4	4	3	3	2	3	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 30/70

Skills: Perception 2, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Natural Weapon (Kick: DV 3P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Emu

Sheep

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	0	6	4	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Climbing 3, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Natural Weapon (Horns: DV 2P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Goat

SMALL PREDATORS

While small in stature, these predators still pack a punch to unsuspecting prey.

Bobcat

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
3	5	4	3	3	3	2	3	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/40

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 5P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Caracal, Lynx, Ocelot

Domestic Cat

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	3	1	3	3	1	3	1/9	6	6	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 10/40

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 1, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Weaknesses: Fragile 2

Similar Animals: All domestic breeds (Burmese, Siamese, Hairless, etc.), Serval

Fox

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	3	1	3	3	1	3	3	6	6	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 15/60

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0)

Ferret

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	2	2	0	1	2	2	1	1	6	4	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 10/30

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0, -1 reach)

Weaknesses: Fragile 1

Similar Animals: Meerkat, Weasel

Mongoose: Unarmed Combat 3, Immunity (Snake Venom)

River Otter: Swimming 2

Raccoon

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	4	3	1	3	3	3	2	2	6	6	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 8/20

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Touch)

Weaknesses: Fragile 1

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals: Red Panda

Trivia-Verse



Two-thirds of a raccoon's brain is devoted to tactile perception, which allows them to open many complex manual locks. With additional knowledge and hardware, any lock short of a maglock is not safe from a raccoon, and even maglocks would withstand for only a matter of time.

Wolverine

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
4	5	4	4	1	3	2	4	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Rare

Movement: 20/40

Skills: Infiltration 1, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Tasmanian Devil: Body 2, Strength 3

SMALL VERMIN

Small vermin have some of the largest and most diverse roles in the world's ecosystems. These include serving as a meal to larger creatures, propagating flora, and feeding on much larger prey. Even with urban expansion, they have adapted and expanded far more easily than other species.

Anole

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	4	2	0	2	1	1	1	1	6	3	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 5/8

Skills: Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Similar Animals: Bearded Dragon, Grass Snake, Skink, Thorny Devil

Frog: Gymnastics 3 (Jumping +2), Amphibious

Chameleon: Adaptive Camouflage

Gecko: Wall Walking

Iguana (Goanna): Body 1, Fragile 2

Cockroach

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	1	3	0	1	2	0	1	0	6	5	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 2/5

Skills: Dodge 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 2,

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Wall Walking

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals: Waterbug

Mosquito (Fly): Intuition 1, Initiative 4, Dodge 1, Flight 1

Grasshopper (Locust): Flight 1, Gymnastics 2 (Jumping +2)

Scarab Beetle (June Bug, Dragonfly): Flight 2

Butterfly (Moth): Flight 1, Dodge 1

Fire Ants

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	1	1	0	1	2	2	1	0	6	3	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 2/5

Skills: Dodge 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 2



Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Natural Weapon (Sting: DV 2P, AP -2), Wall Walking

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals: Bee (Wasp): Flight 1

Spider

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	2	2	0	1	2	1	1	0	6	4	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 3/8

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Climbing 1

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Wall Walking

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals: Black Widow (Brown Recluse, Scorpion): Venom

Orb Weaver: Substance Extrusion (Silk)

Tarantula: Substance Extrusion (Urticating Hairs)

Urgent Message...

BLACK WIDOW VENOM

Vector: Injection

Speed: 1 Minute

Penetration: 0

Power: 5

Effect: Nausea, Physical Damage

SCORPION VENOM

Vector: Injection

Speed: 1 Combat Turn

Penetration: 0

Power: 7

Effect: Physical Damage

URTICATING HAIRS

Vector: Contact

Speed: Immediate

Penetration: 0

Power: 5

Effect: Disorientation

When threatened, a tarantula will begin to move its legs and shed fine barbed hairs. The hairs stick onto the predator's skin and eyes, causing irritation.

SNAKES

Snakes are legless reptiles that are found on all continents except Antarctica.

Cobra

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	4	1	1	1	3	1	2	0	6	4	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 5/10

Skills: Perception 2, Infiltration 3, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0), Enhanced Senses (Thermal), Venom (Cobra Venom)

Similar Animals: Coral Snake, Puff Adder, Viper

Trivia-Verse



Urticating hairs are the primary ingredient for itching powder.

Python

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
4	4	1	4	1	5	1	2	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 3/7

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0), Enhanced Senses (Thermal)

Similar Animals: Boa Constrictor: Body 6, Strength 8

AERIAL

Aerial animals defy gravity and soar among the heavens. Most know no terrestrial boundaries and move between continents.

FLYING VERMIN

They can be categorized as vermin mostly due to their diminutive size. They eat insects, seeds, and any refuse that civilization throws their way.

Canary

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	6	3	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 20/40 (flight)

Skills: Flight 2, Perception 2

Similar Animals: Dove, Finch, Jay, Lovebird, Parakeet, Pigeon, Robin

Hummingbird: Flight 4

Crow

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	2	0	1	4	3	3	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 20/40 (flight)

Skills: Flight 4, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness

Weaknesses: Fragile 2

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals: Magpies, Jackdaw, Raven

Parrot (Macaw): Logic 4, Mimicry

Bat: Enhanced Senses (Echolocation), Fragile 3

Grouse (Quail): Logic 2, Fragile 3

COBRA VENOM

Vector: Injection

Speed: 1 Combat Turn

Penetration: 0

Power: 8

Effect: Physical Damage



INCOMING FEED.....



RAPTORS

Also known as birds of prey, these are the hunters of the sky.

Albatross

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	0	6	5	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 20/40 (flight)

Skills: Flight 4, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Similar Animals: Condor, Cormorant, Frigate Birds, Pelican

Trivia-Verse



Albatross can glide for hours without flapping their wings, and they come to land only to gather and breed. They have adapted and have found new nesting grounds on oil platforms and massive container ships.

Eagle

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	5	3	2	2	3	3	3	0	6	6	1

Frequency: Uncommon

Movement: 20/80 (flight)

Skills: Flight 3, Perception 3, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite/Claw: DV 3P, AP 0)

Similar Animals: Bald Eagle, Harpy Eagle, Turkey Vulture

Eagle Owl

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	4	3	1	2	4	2	2	0	6	7	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 20/60 (flight)

Skills: Flight 3, Perception 3, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Bite/Claw: DV 2P, AP 0), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light)

Similar Animals: Horned Owl, Hawk, Kite, Vulture

Barn Owl (Snow Owl): Fragile 1, Infiltration 2

Falcon (Secretary Bird): Fragile 1

Kestrel: Fragile 2

FOWL

Between the hunters and vermin are various other birds. Some have been domesticated for food—either themselves or their eggs.

Duck

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	2	0	1	2	1	1	1	6	4	1

Frequency: Common

Movement: 20/45 (flight)

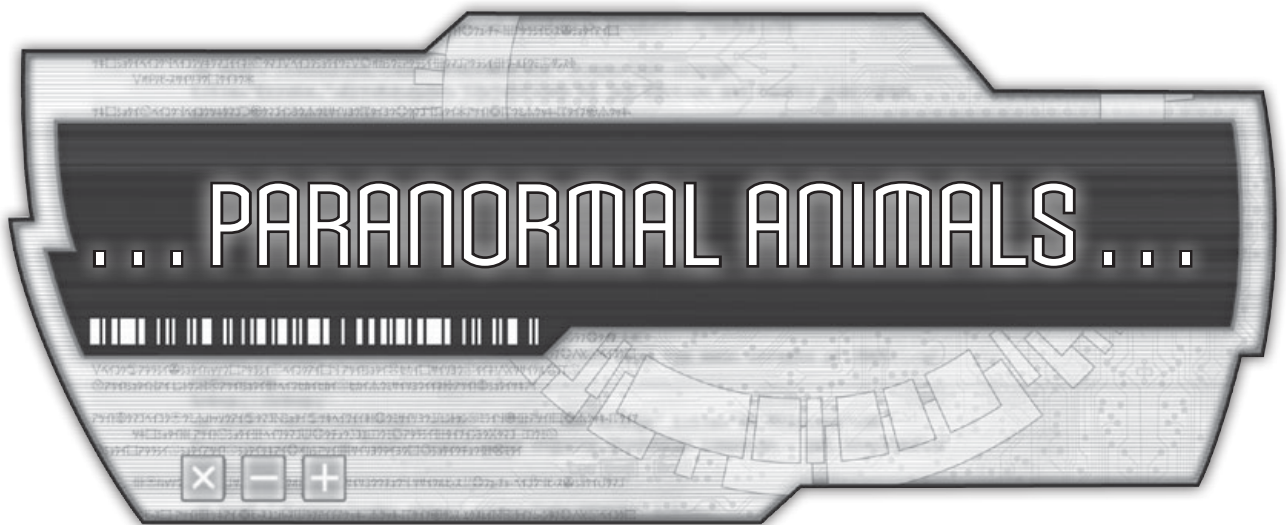
Skills: Flight 2, Perception 2

Weaknesses: Fragile 2

Similar Animals: Goose, Peacock, Pheasant, Seagull, Swan, Turkey

Chicken: Agility 1

MUNDANE CRITTERS



"Moving aerial drones into position now," Rigger X sent over the tactical network. As he did this, he mentally launched a pair of Lockheed Optic-X drones from his Roadmaster. He then brought the camera feed from his Renraku Stormcloud into focus, and using that he designated the destination and flight patterns for the Lockheeds. Over the tacnet, he sent, "Target is continuing to move at five K-P-H northwestward. If it continues at its current rate, we've got five minutes until it hits the river."

"Roger that," came back from a voice over the network. "We have visual confirmation. It looks like it's still heading directly into the trap. EMP should trigger in 30 seconds from my mark."

A few beats later, "Mark."

Rigger X double-checked the speed on his drones and sent, "Aerial drones are out of range of EMP. Turning now to make their attack run in 35 ticks." As a precautionary measure, he told the Stormcloud—his mechanic insisted it was hardened—to increase its elevation another 500 meters. While it rose, he jacked up the zoom to take a closer look.

The target was still lumbering forward. Readouts on the feed indicated that the creature was maintaining its current pace. Mass estimates showed the beast at 7,500 kilograms with a length of 14.5 meters. Things seemed to be going according to plan—the juggernaut apparently suspected nothing.

"Five seconds," was the response from the tacnet. "It's already in range."

When his commlink flashed red to indicate the time of the pulse, all of Rigger X's video feeds went blue, and the tacnet went completely offline. A moment later, he heard a faint boom. His breathing hastened, though he reminded himself that this was supposed to happen. After forcing himself to count to ten, he began scrambling to bring something, anything online.

The Optic-X drones were the first to come online, just in time for him to see their machine guns open up in full-auto, spraying the juggernaut with a barrage of stick-n-shock.

He sent, "It's still moving," over the tacnet, before he realized that it was still offline as he directed the drones to continue making passes on the target.

The Stormcloud and the tacnet both still failed to respond. Glancing at the camera feeds from the other drones, he saw why. The ambushers had moved in too close to the center of the blast. The vehicles were motionless, and it didn't look like anyone was moving inside.

As he watched, the massive creature turned its attention towards one of the Thundercloud Morgans. With a swipe of its front paw, the front end of the vehicle was flattened as the juggernaut began devouring it. Though the drone suddenly began firing its machine guns, the juggernaut seemed oblivious to the attack.

The tacnet was still dead as Rigger X put the Roadmaster into gear and sent the recall signal to the Lockheeds.



At the dawn of the Awakening, the planet was suddenly inundated with a vast array of animals that possessed miraculous adaptations to the ambient levels of mana. This sampling offers a range of these creatures. Some are common prey, some are predators, and some appear to be completely non-threatening. All of these make the Sixth World a very different place from the age that preceded it.

ALPINE

These environments are characterized by steep mountains, usually at altitudes above 3,000 meters, with summer temperatures averaging 10–15 degrees Celsius and below freezing in winter. Creatures that dwell in these environments are typically well-adapted for the cold.

CRESTED BARBARIAN

Macaca cristatus

Habitat: Forests at elevations above 2,100 meters

Range: Mountainous regions in Spain and southeast France

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The crested barbarian resembles a large ape, standing 160 centimeters tall and massing 95 kilograms on average. It has thick brown fur with orange-tinted skin. A ruff or crest of lighter fur ends in a pair of pendulous jowls around the neck. It has a vestigial tail. Its front limbs are slightly longer than its rear limbs to allow mobility on all fours, though it can stand for brief periods on its hind legs.

Habits: The crested barbarian is an Awakened form of the Barbary ape (*Macaca sylvana*), making it a true monkey and not an ape. It was named by a rather eccentric Spanish parazoologist who made a study of the species. They are diurnal and spend roughly equal time moving in trees and walking on the ground. They are docile omnivores, living in groups of six to fifteen adults. Their hierarchy is matriarchal, and both the males and females take care of the young. Males spend time playing and grooming their young, forming a strong bond between the adults and their offspring. Typically, one offspring is born after a gestation of 150 days. Crested barbarians reach maturity in three years and can live up to twenty years in the wild.

Crested barbarians patrol a territory of several square kilometers, though they peacefully coexist with other primate species. Unfortunately, metahumans are not as peaceful towards these primates. Logging has reduced their habitat, and the species is considered a public health threat due to the fact that they carry a dormant virus similar to VITAS-3 (p. 132, *Augmentation*). Hostile encounters with metahumans are typically due to the encroachment of civilization into crested barbarian territory. They will not attack metahumans unless threatened. Even then, they first attempt to scare off intruders by standing up on their hind legs and moving in a large group.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
5	4	4	6	2	3	2	2	2	6	3	7	1

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Climbing 3, Intimidation 2, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Smell), Fear, Pestilence (VITAS-3), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)

DOG ASP

Vipera pseudocanis aspis

Habitat: Low mountains and hilly regions

Range: France, Italy, and northern Spain in elevated areas as high as 2,100 meters, such as the Pyrenees Mountains

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: This snake species reaches lengths of 60 centimeters and masses about 150 grams. It has pale grey to brown scales with a distinct dorsal zigzag stripe and a broad, triangular head that is distinct from the body. The tip of the snout is slightly upturned.

Habits: The dog asp is the Awakened form of the European asp (*Vipera aspis*), and it has one of the most lethal venoms among European snakes. Its venom contains a cytotoxin which will cause cellular necrosis in minutes.

Dog asps have the rather disconcerting and unusual ability to mimic the bark of a dog. They use this ability to either lure prey or offending creatures or to warn trespassers away. The behavior of luring offending creatures is fascinating. It has been reported that pets have been lost to precarious terrain due to a dog asp drawing them over cliffs or into swamps, a factor that grants credibility to the species' reputation for cunning. Dog asps are a solitary species outside of mating season.

Dog asps have been taken as Awakened pets. Attempts have been made to train them to imitate other sounds for entertainment, with mixed degrees of success.

Dog asp behavior is typical of a European asp, as they hunt rodents and lizards. These snakes often sun themselves on rocky outcroppings. They also have similar breeding habits to their mundane relatives and lay clutches of four to six eggs. Dog asps are a little more robust than their progenitors, though, and will remain active later in winter.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	4	4	1	2	4	3	2	2	6	3	8	1

Movement: 10/20

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 3, Shadowing 2

Powers: Concealment (Self), Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Mimicry, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0), Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: 1 Minute, Power: 10, Effect: Physical Damage)

Weaknesses: Fragile (2)

EMBRACER

Gorilla rubicundi

Habitat: Mountain and hilly (preferably volcanic areas)

Range: North, Central, and South America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The embracer is a hominid, and it averages 190 centimeters tall and masses about 220 kilograms. It is completely hairless with smooth, bright red skin that has an almost metallic sheen. Its head is large with small nostrils instead of a pronounced nose. It has a pronounced jaw with sharp teeth. Its eyes are tiny and pig-like. On the top of its head are two curved horns. Its arms are slightly longer, allowing the embracer to move on all fours, but it can rear up on its hind legs when necessary.

Habits: Embracers are the Awakened version of the extinct mountain gorilla (*Gorilla beringei*), but the morphology is very different from their mundane relative, and they have been

granted a new classification. Embracers enjoy high temperatures and prefer to live in caves near volcanoes and hot springs. They are solitary omnivores, hunting birds and medium-sized mammals such as deer. Ninety percent of their diet is composed of meat. Embracers have the ability to slow down their prey, allowing them to capture it more easily. Then they grab it in a bear hug and squeeze the life out of the prey. Finally, they use their sharp teeth to tear into their victims.

The embracer can tolerate much more heat than other primates and doesn't have difficulty shedding excess heat. Their sweat is highly acidic and can cause damage to the exposed flesh of other animals. If confronted by an animal or metahuman of comparable size, it will exhibit a gorilla-like threat display by pounding its chest and tearing up the undergrowth. If the other animal shows subservience (averting the eyes and crouching down), the embracer may not attack.

The largest population of embracers is around Mount St. Helens, with smaller groups at the Liard Hot Springs and Yellowstone.

Embracers gather only to mate. They have one offspring annually. The mother will care for her child. An embracer offspring is helpless for the first few months of its life and will be carried on its mother's back. The young embracer will be able to walk and eat solid food after five months, but it won't be weaned for three years. It won't leave its mother until it is four or five years old, and then it will make its own lair. An embracer becomes mature after eight years.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
5	4	3	5	3	3	2	3	3	6	4	6	1

Movement: 8/25

Skills: Climbing 3, Infiltration 2, Intimidation 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Binding, Corrosive Secretions, Immunity (Fire)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Cold, Mild)

GRIFFIN

Alatusleo Aquila

Habitat: Mountains, generally near open plains or steppes

Range: Northern Hemisphere

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: Though classified as birds, these six-limbed (four legs and two wings), leonine Awakened creatures blur the boundaries between avian and mammalian specimens. From head to hindquarters, these creatures are roughly 3 meters in length. Their tufted tail extends for another meter, and their wingspan is in excess of 7 meters. A mature adult masses 180 kilograms. A griffin's head, wings, and forelimbs strongly resemble those of an eagle, though it has a feathered pair of leonine ears. Its hindquarters and rear legs more closely resemble those of a lion. Its plumage is white or golden, while its furred regions range from golden yellow to pale brown.

Habits: Griffins are solitary hunters. They prefer to target hoofed mammals as prey, including horses and other livestock. Any animal under 1,000 kilograms is a viable target, however. Griffins generally hunt shortly after dawn or at dusk. They enter a powerful dive, raking their target with the powerful claws on their hind limbs. They repeat this attack until their target has been slain. At

that point, griffins will usually take the carcass back to their aerie for consumption and sharing with the pack.

Packs of griffins live in nests built in crags on high-altitude mountains—never less than 1,000 meters above sea level. Though the animals hunt alone, they maintain social communities for sharing food and protecting their young. It's uncommon for more than one egg in a griffin clutch to hatch for each female annually. To offset this lower birth rate, the packs are extremely protective of their young.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
8	6	4	8	1	5	3	4	1	6	9	1

Movement: 20/100 (flight)

Skills: Flight 4, Perception 5, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Vision Magnification), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 8P, AP -1)

HARPY

Harpyia gregaria

Habitat: Harpies nest on elevated surfaces. They are equally at home atop electrical towers in a city or trees in a dense wood.

Range: Global

Frequency: Common

Identification: Harpies stand 120 centimeters tall from foot to head, though their hairless tails add an additional meter in length. Fully grown harpies mass about 40 kilograms. A harpy's face resembles that of an enraged human, though its bat-like ears and 6-meter wingspan clearly demonstrate that it is not metahuman. All confirmed sightings of harpies have been of females with two mammae. Their matted pelts vary from dark brown to black, and they are often heavily encrusted with rotting food and parasites.

Habits: Though harpies are capable of successful predation against birds and mammals under 5 kilograms, they are preferential scavengers. Large nests of harpies are commonly found near active waste dumps. They are rarely selective, readily taking rotting soy and processed food scraps to their nests for consumption.

Flocks near these nesting grounds can number over 100 specimens. They do not have any known hierarchical structure or organization. Harpies initially attempt to warn intruders away from their nesting grounds with their shrill cries. Those who persist in approaching the nests are swarmed by the animals. These nesting grounds constitute a significant public nuisance, particularly since harpies may carry VITAS-3 (p. 132, *Augmentation*). Many municipalities offer bounties on harpy remains.

Aetherpedia Query: Griffin Variants

On the Asian continent, the *Alatusleo serpens* is a variant of the griffin. The primary difference is that its head and neck are scaled rather than feathered. Further, this variant possesses a spiny fin that runs from the base of its neck partway down its spine.

The false griffin (*Opinicus falciform*) is a plains animal that is quite similar to the common griffin. However, it lacks the wings and tufted ears of the true griffin.

As all identified specimens are anatomically female, the details of harpy reproductivity remain unclear. Though there is no distinct breeding period, most harpies lay a clutch of twelve to fifteen eggs every two years. The young hatch in under a week, but they remain in the nest for a year. During this time, they initially suckle the mother and then feed upon scraps that the parent brings to the nest. Infant mortality among harpies is high, which seems to be the primary natural check for harpy overpopulation.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 4 4 3 1 3 2 2 1 6 4 7 1

Movement: 25/120 (flight)

Skills: Flight 3, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Immunity (Pathogens), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 3P, AP 0), Pestilence (VITAS-3)

Weaknesses: Fragile (1)

NIMUE'S SALAMANDER

Salamandra exhaurirus

Habitat: In or near water

Range: Central and eastern Alps above 700 meters; however, it is considered extinct in the wild

Frequency: Extremely Rare

Identification: Nimue's salamander is a small, tailed amphibian with a 15-centimeter body and 10-centimeter tail, and it masses roughly 80 grams. It is black with an irregularly shaped yellow patch between its eyes, a yellow streak on its belly, and wide, bright orange stripes along its sides and the dorsal surface of its tail.

Habits: Nimue's salamander was discovered in 2028 and noted as an unremarkable new species of alp salamander. It lives in rocky terrain near rivers and lakes in the Alps and eats insects, fish, and invertebrates. Nimue's salamander gives birth to two live young with pregnancies lasting two to three years, depending upon the prevailing environmental conditions.

Dr. Nimue, however, performed due diligence in recording the species and discovered its remarkable ability to ground magical energy and even absorb it. While there are no known species that hunt Nimue's salamander with sorcery, it is theorized that Nimue's salamander can prey on magic cast from spirits for its own use. This finding suddenly granted the breed an interested following among megacorporations as a significant security possibility. Many were collected in the '50s, as several corps attempted to train and breed the animals. By 2058, parabiologists reported that due to poaching and increased pollution in the Alps, Nimue's salamander was extinct in the wild.

The majority of the species is held by several European megacorporations. Difficulties in breeding the species and lack of successful training has kept them from being widely used for security. They remain a highly valued species; even untrained, they are an effective deterrent to magical use. They just can't distinguish security from intruders.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
1 3 2 1 2 2 1 2 3 6 5 4 1

Movement: 8/15

Skills: Climbing 2, Counterspelling 3, Perception 3

Powers: Magic Sense, Magical Guard (Self), Movement (Self), Regeneration

Weaknesses: Fragile (2), Vulnerability (Pollutants, Severe)

Note: Nimue's salamander has the Absorption Metamagic ability

with a range of (Essence x 2) meters. Force absorbed this way can be used as hits with Magical Guard or Regeneration.

ORACLE OWL

Bubo ignavus mainusculuse

Habitat: Rocky landscapes with adequate food supply

Range: Southern and central Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The oracle owl stands 90 centimeters tall and masses up to 7 kilograms. It has light brown plumage with a white patch on its breast and yellow-brown feathers on its ventral surfaces. It has large, bright orange eyes and long, white arching ear tufts.

Habits: The oracle owl is the Awakened cousin of the European eagle owl (*Bubo ignavus*). It feeds mainly upon small mammals and reptiles, though it has been known to kill larger game, including boars and small deer. Larger prey (over 4 kilograms) is consumed on the ground instead of back in the trees. The oracle owl is a nocturnal hunter with specially designed wing structures and feathers that allow almost silent flight. It has highly acute senses and is rumored to be precognitive—hence the name.

After courtship, an oracle owl creates nests in crevices and cave entrances. If none are available, it will nest in fallen trees or bushes. Oracle owls have two to four eggs at a time. The male feeds the female as she cares for the offspring. While oracle owls are territorial, breeding pair territory can overlap. When their territory is threatened, oracle owls call upon other birds to attack the threat.

Young oracle owls (under three years old) have a particular habit of forming symbiotic bonds with individual metahumans. They provide companionship and warning in return for food and protection. An oracle owl can live up to 60 years. Corporations have trained a few to be personal bodyguards. This combined with the ability to cast spells has led to debates about the possibility of oracle owls being a sapient species.

Due to the destruction of natural habitat, hunting rodents in toxic zones, and their low fertility rate, the oracle owl is on the critically endangered species list. It has been protected by all the European nations and most of the European megacorporations. The highest population center of oracle owls is in Greece and Italy.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 5 2 1 3 6 3 3 2 6 4 8 1

Movement: 30/60 (flight)

Skills: Counterspelling 4, Flight 4, Perception 4, Spellcasting 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Animal Control (Avians), Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell, Touch, Thermographic Vision), Gestalt Consciousness, Magic Sense, Magical Guard (Self), Mind Link, Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 2 AP 0), Search, Silence (Self)

Weaknesses: Vulnerability (Toxins)

Note: The oracle owl can cast any detection spell (at gamemaster discretion).

ROC, GREATER

Aquila maxima

Habitat: The greater roc nests in very high mountains but has a hunting radius of over 5,000 kilometers.

Range: Himalayan peaks

Frequency: Extremely Rare

Identification: The roc is the world's largest bird by a vast margin, making these avians very easy to identify. Based upon their body type and coloration, it's assumed that they are Awakened eagles. The roc has a wingspan that's approximately 40 meters with a body length in excess of 10 meters. Estimates place the bird at well over 10,000 kilograms in mass. A greater roc's breast and the underside of its wings are white, while its head, upper wings, and back are dark brown. Its enormous beak and talons are yellow.

Habits: Globally, it's estimated that there are fewer than twenty of these massive predatory birds. Satellite and radar imagery indicates that they nest in the Himalayan peaks; however, their global range is extensive, with encounters confirmed in Indonesia, Siberia, and the Middle East. It's believed that their Awakened nature plays a crucial role in their ability to fly, particularly as they spend most of their lives flying in the lower stratosphere at elevations above 10 kilometers.

Greater rocs do feed while in flight, dipping lower to devour other large flying animals or inhaling swarms of birds, bats, and insects with a single swallow. However, these small prey do little to assuage the hunger of such a massive creature. More often, they swoop low to the ground and snatch a large animal—including cattle, water buffalo, rhinos, and even small elephants—with their powerful talons. After ascending to a height of nearly a kilometer, they release their prey, allowing gravity to take its toll. The birds seem to take a sadistic pleasure in watching their prey fall. Rocs then swoop in to devour their prey.

On rare occasions, a greater roc will mistakenly snatch an automobile or small plane instead of a prey animal. Metahumans outside of vehicles are simply too small for the roc to consider prey.

Little information is known about the breeding habits of the greater roc. However, scientists and enchanters have expressed substantial interest in obtaining samples for analysis.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
20	4	4	45	1	4	2	6	2	6	8	8	1

Movement: 20/ 150 (flight)

Skills: Counterspelling 5, Flight 6, Perception 5, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Armor (8/10), Enhanced Senses (Vision Magnification), Fear, Immunity (Cold), Magical Guard, Movement, Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 24P, AP 0)

Note: +4 Reach

SABER-TOOTH CAT

Felis novalis

Habitat: The saber-tooth cat is found primarily in mountainous and hilly terrain.

Range: North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The saber-tooth cat closely resembles its mundane relative, the mountain lion (*Felis concolor*). Like the mountain lion, the saber-tooth cat is a tawny golden brown cat with powerful limbs and a constantly moving tail. The most obvious difference is the pair of 25-centimeter-long fangs that extend from the cat's upper jaw. The saber-tooth cat can grow to nearly 2 meters in length and mass over 120 kilograms.

Habits: Saber-tooth cats are generally solitary predators. These animals are adapted to hunt any time they feel hunger. Their

natural prey are large herbivores, which include deer, wild goats, and even moose. In addition, saber-tooth cats will at times attack domestic farm animals, particularly those that stray outside enclosed farmlands or on farms close to their lairs. Metahumans are rarely targeted.

These cats are fundamentally lazy. They hunt only one or two times per week unless they are also providing food for newborns. When a prey animal is killed, they gorge themselves and leave the remainder for scavengers. The rest of the time, a saber-tooth cat prefers to find a warm spot and lounge in the sun or sleep in the warmest part of its lair—typically a small cave or natural hollow. When its appetite is fulfilled, the saber-tooth cat is a surprisingly peaceful animal. Prey animals are ignored at such times, and the non-territorial predator may even allow metahumans to approach it.

Breeding season begins in the early spring. At this time, the saber-tooth cat's instincts become extremely territorial. Males may fight over females, with the losers often seriously injured. Young are born after an eight-week pregnancy. About a month later, typically in late June, the young leave the lair and fend for themselves. Until that time, both male and female saber-tooth cats will brutally attack any predator or metahuman that approaches the lair.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
5	5	4	5	3	4	2	2	2	6	8	1

Movement: 10/50

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 4, Shadowing 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 6P, AP -1)

SIREN

Siren canori

Habitat: Mountainous regions at least 1,000 meters above sea level

Range: Global

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The siren is a flying reptile reminiscent of interpretations made from fossils of the pterodactyl. It has a 250-centimeter wingspan and masses about 15 kilograms at maturity. Two clawed fingers protrude from the front edge of each membranous wing at the center joint. Its powerfully taloned feet end in sharp claws that complement its hooked beak. The reptile is a mottled brown on its dorsal side and a very pale grey on its ventral side, allowing it to blend in to cloud cover when viewed from the ground.

Habits: Sirens are diurnal predators. Though they dwell and sometimes hunt in family groups, they are usually solitary hunters. Upon spotting a prey animal—which can be virtually any animal up to 20 kilograms in mass—the siren will swoop down and attempt to kill it with a single strike to the back of the head. If the siren fails to kill in the first strike, it will continue to harass the prey animal with repeated swooping attacks. In some cases, the reptile may use its seductive song to calm its target prior to a second attack. This has the advantage of often preventing targets from defending themselves.

Once prey is killed, a siren will carry it back to its nest to share with its family. In a few instances, a siren may defeat prey that is too large for it to carry. In rare instances, this has included unsuspecting metahumans. On those occasions, the siren will use its talons and beak to butcher the prey and then carry the grue-

some pieces to its lair. A lair in a large cavern or tunnel complex may host several mated pairs and their offspring. However, many siren families choose to lair apart from others of their kind.

Female sirens are the dominant hunter, while males remain near the lair to defend the nest. A female lays a single egg up to four times annually. Eggs hatch in less than two months. Young mature quickly, achieving their mature adult size and abilities within nine months.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 6 5 3 1 5 3 3 1 6 4 10 2

Movement: 10/35 (flight)

Skills: Flight 2, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Gestalt Consciousness, Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP -1), Paralyzing Howl

Weaknesses: Fragile (2)

STONEBINDER

Myotis saxi

Habitat: Caves, tree hollows, or heavily shaded areas near mountainous and woodland areas

Range: Northern half of North America

Frequency: Common

Identification: Genetic analysis has revealed that the stonebinder is an Awakened variant of the common brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*). The primary visible cues of this variant are its wingspan, which can be up to 70 centimeters, and its long barbed tail, which can extend up to 35 centimeters. These animals can mass up to 200 grams. Closer inspection of many specimens reveals that the bat's tiny eyes are frequently blinded by cataracts.

Habits: Stonebinders, like their mundane relatives, are nocturnal omnivores. They are equally content with scavenging fruit or preying upon insects. When hunting, flocks of up to a dozen stonebinders use their echolocation to identify flying prey. They catch their prey in flight, either swallowing it whole while flying or perching just long enough to break it apart and eat it.

These flying mammals are not territorial or aggressive. Unless captured, cornered, or defending their nest, stonebinders will flee from attack. In spite of that, they are extremely capable of defending themselves when threatened.

The most minor of their defenses is their envenomed tails. The toxin is potent and potentially lethal to metahumans. Their greater threat, however, is their spit. Stonebinders have a gland located in their jaws that can secrete an Awakened enzyme. When they are threatened, they trigger this gland and spit its secretions at their targets. Their victims are irreversibly turned to stone. Stonebinders seem to be immune to the effects of this secretion.

Some enchanters use the stonebinder petrification gland in their formulas. Because of the potential for harm, some municipalities offer a bounty on stonebinders. An enterprising exterminator can turn in the pelt for a bounty and still sell the head of a stonebinder to a talismonger, collecting twice on each kill.

Stonebinder flocks preferentially lair in caves by day, though they occasionally can be found in hollow trees or abandoned buildings. Pairs mate for life. Each mated pair typically produces one offspring annually, birthing in the late summer. Young stonebinders achieve full growth and maturity within eight weeks of birth.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 4 4 1 1 4 1 2 1 6 3 8 1

Movement: 5/25 (flight)

Skills: Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Echolocation), Gestalt Consciousness, Immunity (Toxins), Petrification, Venom (Vector: Contact, Speed: 1 Combat Turn, Power: 6, Effect: Physical Damage)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Severe), Fragile (2)

THUNDERBIRD, GREATER

Avesfulmen splendidus

Habitat: North American mountains

Range: Alaska Range, Cascade, and Rocky Mountains at elevations above 4,000 feet

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The greater thunderbird has an eagle-like appearance but with a 10-meter wingspan and massing 100 kilograms. White feathers cover its head, neck, and tail, while the rest of its plumage ranges from dark brown to black. Its eyes are bright gold in appearance.

Juvenile greater thunderbirds have a solid brown-to-black feather coat that molts into white feathers when they mature in four to five years.

Habits: Like the smaller thunderbird (*Avesfulmen minori*), the greater thunderbird can generate and project electric energy. Upon death, a thunderbird disintegrates in a final discharge of electricity. Because of this, understanding the physiology and examining the genetics of the greater thunderbird remains a challenge for parazoologists.

The greater thunderbird is a hunter and scavenger, feeding on goat, deer, and even bear as well as using its knack for electrical projection to strike prey. It's active mostly during the daylight, but it has keen enough eyesight to hunt during the night. Its typical hunting and scavenging behavior is to strike a mountainside and cause an avalanche or to go to an avalanche and search for remains. It's efficient, as it can take down a whole herd with a single attack, and the food doesn't go to waste as the cold preserves it. Alternatively, it will stun its prey with an electrical attack before carrying it off to higher elevations and then dropping it, hoping that either the fall or the cold will kill the prey. Attacks upon metahumans are rare. Recorded cases have concluded that the greater thunderbird was defending its nest from mountaineers who accidentally came too close.

The greater thunderbird will hunt alone, but it is social enough that couples and groups may scrounge in the same avalanche for victims without conflict.

Like a raptor, it will tear off pieces with its beak rather than swallow prey whole. What is unusual, though, is that it will move and rebury leftover food, effectively creating a pantry of cold storage for when food is scarce. Parazoologists have used these caches to determine the health and population of the greater thunderbird; as much as 1,000 kilograms of meat from large mammals has been found in a single cache.

The greater thunderbird mates for life high up in the mountains. Nests that are 6 to 8 meters wide have been found between 2,500 and 3,000 meters above sea level. Observation of their nests has shown that they care for one to two young for three to four months, until the fledglings are capable of flight. Greater thunder-

birds provide pieces of meat for their young in their early months, and then they provide whole prey for the young to learn how to hunt and feed on their own.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
4 3 7 8 1 4 2 3 1 6 6 11 1

Movement: 10/50 (flight)

Skills: Astral Combat 3, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Lightning Strike) 3, Flight 3, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Dual Natured, Elemental Attack (Electricity), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 6P, AP 0), Weather Control (Electrical Storms)

WILD SATYR

Capra satyrus

Habitat: Mountains

Range: Southern Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The wild satyr is a goat-like creature that stands just over a meter tall and masses up to 55 kilograms. It has a short tail and shaggy hair. It also has a set of hollow, curled horns that are reminiscent of a bighorn sheep's wrapping around its ears. Males have a short beard and a mane of chest fur. All of the wild satyr's limbs end in four toes, with the rear feet having a thicker nail resembling a hoof. Wild satyr fur comes in shades of grey or white. While it climbs on all fours, the satyr can stand and walk erect for short distances.

Habits: Wild satyrs, not to be confused with the ork metavariant, are peaceful herbivores living in the hills and mountains. They live in nomadic groups of up to 100 members. Hierarchy of a group is established and challenged by the clashing of horns. It is not a strict hierarchy, as the group doesn't follow one leader. While they don't have opposable thumbs, they do exhibit grooming behavior, combing the wool of their fellows to remove twigs and ticks.

A wild satyr has a two-chambered stomach to process the grasses and lichens that they eat.

The wild satyr is a primitive species, and it has been questioned whether they are truly sapient and deserving of metahuman rights. Wild satyrs communicate through a wide range of whistles, and they warn other wild satyrs away from polluted areas and predators. They also have what can only be called a communal party: females gather berries and other fruit; they eat a portion of the fruit while using simple tools to crush the rest in a bowl-shaped rock or hollow. They then regurgitate the eaten portion into the bowl. The enzymes from the first stomach ferment the fruit into a powerful alcoholic brew that all the wild satyrs clearly enjoy. The entire group will enthusiastically share in the alcoholic mixture. Some parabiologists have been fortunate enough to share the brew with the wild satyrs.

Wild satyrs have a nine-month gestation period, and they can have one to two offspring a year. Until the young are strong enough to jump around mountainous terrain on their own, females will often carry them. This continues until they are weaned at four to six months of age.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 4 5 2 3 4 4 3 2 6 4 9 2

Movement: 15/40

Skills: Climbing 6, Perception 3, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Accident, Concealment (Self), Enhanced Senses (Smell, Taste), Natural Weapon (Horns: DV 2P, AP 0)

COASTAL OCEAN

This environment encompasses the shallow seas close to shore. Beyond these coastal regions, the continental shelf ends and ocean waters become substantially deeper. These shallows, tidepools, beaches, and estuaries are generally dense with life.

BOOBRIE

Grus carnivori

Habitat: Shoreline, lakeshores, and estuaries

Range: West Coast of North America, Gulf Coast, and Florida Peninsula

Frequency: Common

Identification: The boobrie is a large wading bird resembling a crane. It has a slightly hooked red beak and clawed webbed feet. It stands 185 centimeters tall with a wingspan of 280 centimeters and a weight of 5 kilograms. Its plumage varies from black to dark grey, while its legs are the same bright red as its beak. Its distinctive cry is more raucous than a peacock's.

Habits: The boobrie is a fish eater. It stands motionless in shallow water until a fish swims near. Then with lightning-fast reflexes, it catches the fish in its beak. With one clawed foot, it grabs and tears the fish into smaller pieces to eat. The boobrie is an opportunistic hunter, and it will not pass up small mammals or birds that come into reach. The boobrie has also been noted to eat carrion.

Boobries nest in flocks of up to 100 individuals. They make platform nests in the water and lay two eggs at a time. Both parents take care of their young. When fishing in numbers, they spread out along the shoreline. This flocking behavior is a mutual defense tactic. A boobrie under attack cries out, which brings the rest of the flock to its aid. The bird's size and sharp claws and beak are usually a deterrent to predators.

Boobries carry a virus similar to VITAS-3 (p. 132, *Augmentation*). While dormant in this species, the virus is potent in the bird's victims and predators.

Boobries have a short southerly migration pattern during the winter. Recently, a large portion of the boobrie's habitat was destroyed by the twin quakes in California. West Coast boobries now migrate eastward to the Gulf Coast, avoiding the polluted waterways. However, several flocks were killed before this change was established.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 3 5 2 2 3 2 2 2 6 3 8 1

Movement: 20/45 (flight)

Skills: Flight 3, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 3P, AP 0), Pestilence (VITAS-3)

Note: +1 Reach

EACH UISGE

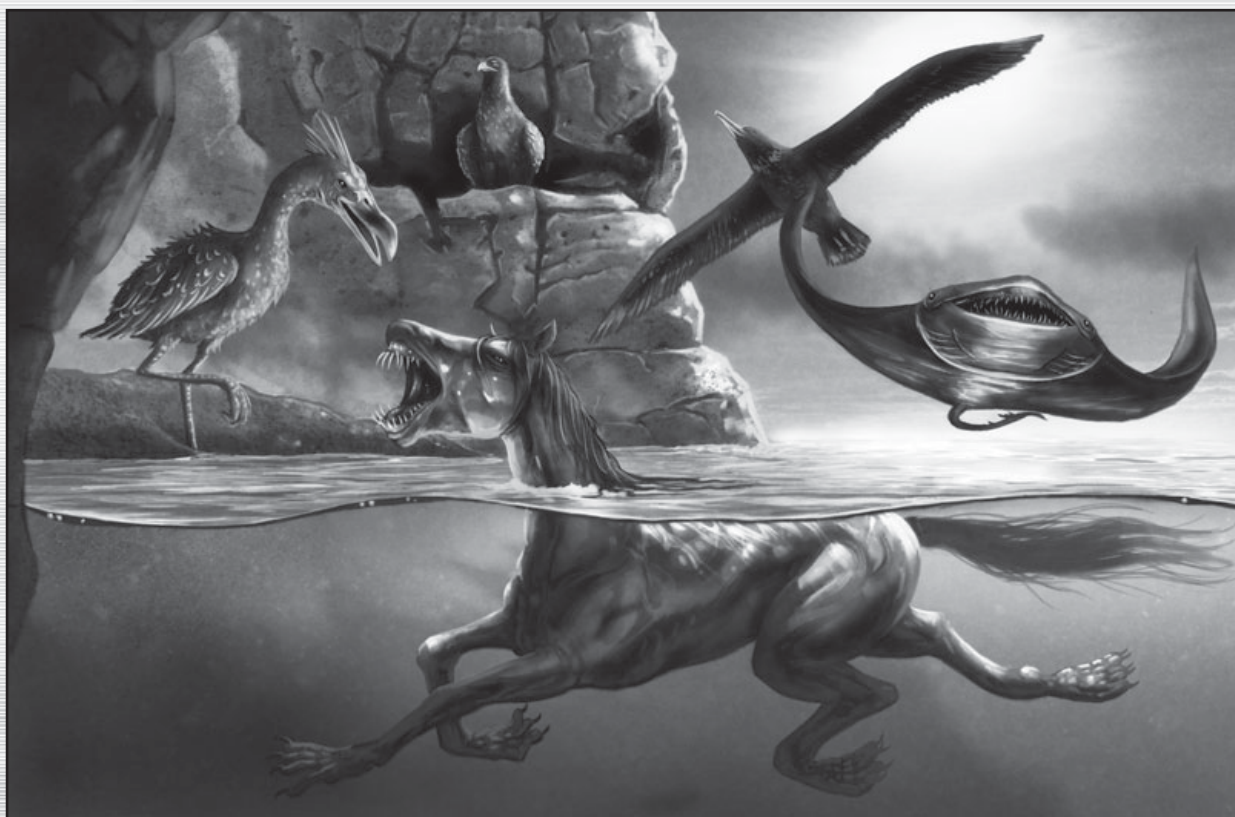
Equus aquaticus

Habitat: Coastal areas and lochs (both fresh and sea)

Range: British Isles and coasts of northern Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The each uisge is an aquatic mammal resembling a horse with a dark flowing mane. It also has a pair of short horns behind its ears and sharp teeth. Its feet are four- and five-toed claws instead of hooves.



INCOMING FEED.....

Habits: The each uisge (pronounced ekk-wizz-kee) is a strange creature that feeds exclusively on metahuman flesh. It attempts to compel its victim to ride it, and it rides back into the water, drowning its rider. The each uisge's sticky, hydrophobic coating is a powerful adhesive that prevents the victim from escaping. If the compulsion does not work, the each uisge can trample or drag the victim into the water.

After drowning a victim, an each uisge tears him or her apart, starting with the belly and discarding the liver, which is poisonous to its metabolism. The animal then consumes the rest of the victim.

While the each uisge rely on a diet of metahuman flesh, they are particular in the type of metahuman and the parts of a metahuman that they will eat. These predators do not eat troll flesh, and they will eat ork flesh only when nothing else is available. This may be due to a troll's dermal deposits, a presentation issue, or possibly flavor. Each uisge will, of course, kill trolls if confronted.

It has lungs as well as gill slits along its neck, allowing respiration in and out of the water. Between each clawed digit is a bit of webbing for swimming mobility, though it can move unnaturally fast in or out of the water. An each uisge will stay out of water up to four hours before returning. Necropsies show that the lungs are fully functional, so there may be another physiological requirement. The adhesive which binds the victim to the each uisge loses its adhesion and breaks down quickly when the animal dies.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
9 5 2 9 4 3 3 4 2 6 4 5 1

Movement: 30/80 (swimming/running)

Skills: Perception 3, Running 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Binding, Compulsion, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Sonar), Movement (Self), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 6P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Flesh), Allergy (Liver, Severe)

NIGHT MANTA

Aetobatus Aerii

Habitat: Coastal areas and oceans

Range: Areas surrounding the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea

Frequency: Extremely Rare

Identification: The night manta has a similar appearance to marine rays, averaging 180 centimeters in length with a wingspan of 3 meters. The night manta has several rows of sharp needle-like teeth. They have jet black skin and a 70 centimeter-long tail ending in four poisonous barbs. The night manta also flies through the air.

Habits: The creature dubbed the night manta is an Awakened eagle ray, though it is not confined to water. It can levitate into the air through magical means. The night manta is nocturnal, and it hunts prey such as small mammals and bats. Its jet black skin makes it virtually invisible at night. When hunting, it makes an initial pass against its prey by using its whip-like tail to sting victims with a neurotoxin. Once its prey is injured, the ray swoops in to feed, tearing apart its victim with its many rows of teeth.

The night manta is still an aquatic fish. It lacks lungs; however, it has developed the ability to breathe through cutaneous respiration. It gulps in air and pushes it through a heavily salinated mucus that coats an oxygen-absorbing membrane on its gills. Using this procedure, it

can maintain respiration for eight hours before returning to the water. This respiration system generates a soft hissing noise, but it doesn't hinder the ray's stealth. Before leaving the water, it also covers itself in the same mucus to prevent its skin from drying out.

Night mantas are a very rare species. Less than twenty have been documented in and out of the water. There have been some reports of metahumans being stung by night mantas but not otherwise attacked or eaten. While night mantas are dual-natured, they have not been observed to hunt on the astral plane.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
6 6 4 6 1 4 2 3 2 6 4 8 1

Movement: 15/30 (swimming)

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon (Tail Spikes) 3, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Spellcasting 4, Swimming 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Dual Natured, Innate Spell (Levitate), Natural Ranged Weapon (Sting: DV 2P, AP 0), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0), Shadow Cloak, Silence, Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: 1 Combat Turn, Power: 6, Effect: Physical Damage)

Note: -1 Reach

ROC, LESSER

Diomedea roc

Habitat: Oceanic waters and shoreline cliffs

Range: North American coastal regions

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The lesser roc is most immediately characterized by its 6-meter wingspan. The seabird can attain a body length of 2 meters and a mass of over 15 kilograms. The bird's plumage is mostly white, though it fades to black along the back of its wings and head. Its talons and beak are hooked and sharpened for rending and tearing prey animals.

Habits: The lesser roc is an Awakened variant of the albatross (*Diomedea exulans*) that grows substantially larger than its mundane relative. Like its relatives, the lesser roc is a carnivore that feeds primarily on sea life and occasionally scavenges carrion. However, the lesser roc is also more predatory, with a tendency to also target smaller birds for prey—which can include a number of relatively large predatory birds. These birds are aggressive, though generally solitary hunters. They will not hesitate to steal food from other predators, including metahumans. Reports of lesser rocs stealing food from the decks of metahuman fishing vessels are well-substantiated.

Lesser rocs travel along both North American coastlines, following the seasons—to the northern reaches in the summer and the southern in the winter. Migration seems to be tied to following prey rather than any particular fear of extreme weather conditions. These birds often travel above dangerous weather systems at elevations approaching 12 kilometers. They can stay at these heights for an extended period, often descending only long enough to capture prey.

Nesting grounds are found on sheer oceanside cliffs, primarily in the northerly regions where they dwell in the mid-spring during their breeding season. Colonies are densely populated and fiercely defended by mature rocs. These birds mate for life, and the female lays one egg each season. Young hatch after five weeks, and they are airborne by mid-August. Though a mated pair does not travel together outside of the mating season, mates will return to the same nest each spring.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
4 5 4 4 1 4 2 2 1 6 3 8 1

Movement: 15/40 (flight)

Skills: Flight 5, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Vision Magnification), Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins)

DESERT

Deserts have very little rainfall year round to support plant and animal life. Any fauna must burrow, either to keep warm or cool. There are two types of deserts: hot and dry or cold. Hot and dry deserts get less than 15 centimeters of annual rainfall. Cold deserts have heavy snow and rain during the winter.

ARMADILLO, GREATER

Dasypus major

Habitat: Deserts

Range: Southern portions of North America

Frequency: Common

Identification: The greater armadillo is an Awakened variant of the nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*). As with its mundane relatives, a complex of dermal bones coated with horn provides armor for this mammal. A single plate covers its hindquarters, and another covers its shoulders. Nine overlapping narrower plates protect the armadillo's body while allowing it flexibility. Its front paws have four claws, while its back paws have five. All of its powerful claws are shaped for burrowing. While its head and limbs are also armored, a coating of soft fur is all that protects its underside. The greater armadillo can grow up to 120 centimeters in length with a tail of up to an additional 50 centimeters. This species can mass 90 kilograms.

Habits: These nocturnal predators spend their days sleeping in shallow burrows. At night, they feed primarily on insects, grubs, and ground worms. Due to their poor vision, greater armadillos depend heavily upon their sense of smell to find prey. Once they detect underground animals, they use their powerful claws to dig swiftly through any surface—including concrete or pavement—to reach their prey. In order to maintain their large size, armadillos spend most of their time in search of food.

When threatened, the greater armadillo's immediate response is to leap to a height of up to 75 centimeters—which has led to countless accidents between greater armadillos and passing cars. Upon landing, the armadillo can either curl into a ball or engage a threat with its sharp claws. However, there's little consistency or wisdom in its choice of response. A greater armadillo is as likely to attack a saber-tooth cat as it is to curl up and defend itself from a jackrabbit.

Their breeding season is in the later summer, when greater armadillos become uncharacteristically territorial. Like their mundane relatives, greater armadillos are unusual in that every birth cohort is a litter of four identical quadruplets. Young are born in the early spring, and they travel with their mother for their first year.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
4 3 3 4 1 3 1 2 1 6 4 6 1

Movement: 3/10

Skills: Perception 1, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (6/8), Enhanced Senses (Smell), Immunity (Toxins), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 3P, AP -2)

Weaknesses: Reduced Senses (Vision)

Note: -1 Reach

BLACK WASP

Sphex Atlantica

Habitat: Deserts

Range: Namib Desert

Frequency: Common

Identification: Awakened black wasps are best characterized by their size. Though they share the proportions and identifiers of a typical wasp—six limbs, a venomous stinger, a black carapace, and two pair of wings—these specimens are much larger. Black wasps have been observed with wingspans up to 15 centimeters in length and a body length of 12 centimeters. These insects can have a stinger that exceeds a centimeter in length.

Habits: Black wasps are predators and parasites. They are a diurnal species that preys upon smaller desert insects, including other wasps. These insects will quickly paralyze their prey and then bring it to their nest for consumption.

Like all wasps, these specimens exhibit substantial sexual dimorphism. As the stinger is an extension of the ovipositor, only females are capable of stinging. Male black wasps barely grow beyond the larval stage. Once a male matures, it takes flight to the nearest black wasp nest. There, it mates with a young female and is promptly devoured by the other inhabitants of the nest. Black wasps lack a hierarchy—all females are capable of laying eggs.

They nest in burrows dug from sand dunes. Nests may become exposed by intense winds, causing a swarm to spread over a large area. When this happens, solitary wasps aggressively attempt to implant their eggs.

Their parasitism comes into play during their breeding phase. When a female is ready to lay eggs, it finds a suitable host organism. It may use a trap door spider, as its mundane relatives do, but it can also use much larger animals and metahumans. It initially attempts to paralyze its victim and then quickly inject its eggs while stinging the host.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
0	5	5	1	1	3	1	3	1	6	2	8	1

Movement: 5/20 (flight)

Skills: Climbing 1, Flight 1, Perception 1, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Natural Weapon (Sting: DV 2, AP +1), Paralyzing Touch, Pestilence (Wasp Larvae), Search, Wall Walking

Note: On an attack that deals at least 1 box of physical damage, a victim will be injected with black wasp larvae. -2 Reach

DEATHRATTLE

Crotalus nex

Habitat: Deserts and arid regions

Range: Southwest and southern regions of North America

Frequency: Common

Identification: The deathrattle is a snake species averaging 190 centimeters in length and massing 19 kilograms. Its scales are patterned in an olive color overlaid with a series of dark brown diamonds with slightly lighter centers along its dorsal edge. Each diamond is edged by cream-colored scales as is the belly. Its mouth contains two large fangs that are hinged to fold when its mouth closes.

Habits: The deathrattle is an Awakened variant of the diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*). Death rattles are nocturnal hunters, preying on small mammals and birds. It has

BLACK WASP LARVAE

Vector: Black Wasp Sting

Speed: 12 hours (8)

Penetration: 0

Power: 4

Nature: Parasite

Effect: Paralysis, Physical Damage

The black wasp eggs grow into larvae within the host's body, keeping it paralyzed. After a 96-hour incubation, mature wasps will burrow out of the host's skin, inflicting a further 4P damage. A hospital stay or a Cure Disease spell will eliminate the larvae.

sensory pits below its eyes that grant thermographic vision. These snakes prefer to sneak up on their prey and bite swiftly, injecting venom. After the prey dies, it is swallowed whole as the snake unhinges its jaw. In this manner, death rattles can swallow larger prey up to the size of a small rabbit.

When a deathrattle feels threatened, it can spit venom at targets up to 2 meters away. It's a common myth that a deathrattle—or any rattlesnake—will warn with the shaking of its rattle before striking. A deathrattle attempts to strike at the face to blind its target. The venom is quite lethal and chemically similar to the tetrodotoxin found in pufferfish. The toxin can be absorbed by the skin, and it has the added side effect of agonizing pain. An adult deathrattle has enough venom for as many as five bites or spits. The deathrattle's threat display is the shaking of its horn-plated rattle.

Female death rattles have clutches of seven to twenty eggs, which they guard. After hatching, the offspring stay with the mother for only a few hours before going on their own. This puts the mortality rate for young death rattles fairly high.

The deathrattle is farmed for its venom to create antivenin. This antivenin works well for other rattlesnake species, and these snakes have more venom from which to create a counter agent. The deathrattle is also poached for its rattle, which is used in enchanting, and its skin, which is used in illegal clothing manufacture.

During the day, the deathrattle is often found sunning on rocks in torpor; however, its reaction towards approaching threats is not mitigated while in torpor.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	3	4	3	2	5	1	2	2	6	4	9	1

Movement: 10/30

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon (Venom Spit) 3, Infiltration 3, Intimidation 2, Perception 3, Swimming 1, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Immunity (Toxins), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0), Venom (Vector: Contact, Speed: 10 Minutes, Power: 9, Effect: Physical Damage, Disorientation)

GILA DEMON

Heloderma diabolis

Habitat: Deserts and badlands far from water

Range: Southwestern North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: These large lizards are an Awakened variant of the Gila monster (*Heloderma suspectum*). They can grow up to 170

centimeters in length and mass in excess of 70 kilograms. Their sausage-like bodies and tails are covered with beadlike scales that vary in color from yellow to red or black. Most specimens show a pattern of striping that camouflages these lizards in their native environment. The Gila demon's black tongue often flickers from its mouth in a snakelike manner, allowing it to smell prey. Their forelimbs have powerful claws that are used in predation as well as digging.

Habits: Gila demons are omnivorous, devouring roots and berries as well as small mammals, other lizards, and insects. They can hunt at any hour, depending on the availability of prey. When they sense the smell of a prey animal, these monsters become determined hunters. Their pursuit can be relentless, and they show clear enthusiasm when digging out the nest of a burrowing animal. Gila demons rely upon their powerful venom to kill prey quickly, and they typically devour their targets in a single gulp, using their neck muscles to force still-twitching victims into their digestive tract.

During daylight hours, these lizards can often be found basking in sunlight to raise their body temperature. Despite their laconic appearance, they can move extremely swiftly during this time if prey becomes available.

When threatened, Gila demons tend to take extreme responses. Though they'll rarely target prey animals larger than them, they will always confront a predator rather than back down. Similarly, they are territorial animals, readily fighting other Gila demons when encountered.

Mating season is in the late spring. At this time, males use their sense of smell to track females and approach. Often, the female will reject the male, triggering a combat response. When mating is successful, clutches of four to eight eggs are buried in the sand and abandoned. Juveniles hatch late the following spring, achieving maturity over the next year.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
4	4	4	4	1	4	1	3	1	6	8	1

Movement: 5/20

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (2/3), Enhanced Senses (Smell, Vision), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 2P, AP 0), Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: 3 Combat Turns, Power: 9, Effect: Physical Damage)

NOVA SCORPION

Scorpionida novalis

Habitat: Subtropical deserts

Range: Arabian, Chihuahuan, Kalahari, Mojave, Sonoran, and Sahara Deserts

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The nova scorpion, as its name implies, is a large scorpion, approximately 1 meter long and massing up to 30 kilograms. It has a gold-colored carapace, six segmented legs, two large claws, and a 20 centimeter-long segmented tail ending in a sharp stinger.

Habits: The nova scorpion lives in warm deserts, burrowing lairs into the sand where its coloration helps to camouflage it. It is nocturnal and photophobic. The nova scorpions feeds on insects, small rodents, and lizards. It first catches prey animals with its pincers, and then it either crushes the victim or injects it with a neurotoxin from its stinger. The nova scorpion goes against the old adage of the bigger the scorpion, the lesser the poison, as the nova scorpion contains one of the most poisonous venoms known.

Nova scorpions are farmed and milked for their venom, which fetches a high price on the market. Even at their size, they still try to hide from threats, fearing the shadows of birds of prey or metahumans. When frightened or cornered, a nova scorpion will arch its tail and raise its pincers in a threatening stance. If that doesn't work, it will sting and pinch whatever threatens it.

It is semi-social, and three to five nova scorpions can be found occupying the same burrow or shelter. The female scorpion will give birth to a brood of eight live young, which she carries on her back to maintain moisture and temperature levels for the young until their first molt; then they are on their own. A nova scorpion will molt three to four times before reaching maturity.

Nova scorpions attack greater sand spiders on sight because they compete for food. While nova scorpions can't be trained, corporate facilities nurture a hospitable environment for them, as they work well as a hidden perimeter defense at night. The nova scorpion doesn't have the same flaw as its progenitors, as its carapace doesn't glow under black light.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	4	4	3	1	5	2	3	2	6	3	9	1

Movement: 5/10

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (2/4), Concealment (Self), Natural Weapon (Claws/Sting: DV 2P, AP -1), Venom (see below)

DESERT-SCRUB

Though not as dry as a true desert, these environments still receive little water. They are characterized as dry and temperate areas with mild winters and very hot summers. There is typically a broad assortment of woody vegetation low to the ground.

AARDWOLF

Proteles novalis

Habitat: Barren desert and scrublands

Range: Southwestern and Midwest North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The Awakened North American species of aardwolf is a relative of the hyena. Its pelt is a sandy beige color mottled with darker spots. The texture of this coat is short and bristly with a mane of darker hackles on its back. The mammal averages about 90 centimeters to the shoulder and masses in at over 35 kilograms. When threatened, the hackles along its spine rise as the animal growls and barks threateningly.

Habits: The proportions and habits of the North American aardwolf are substantially different from those of its mundane

NOVA SCORPION VENOM

Vector: Injection

Speed: 1 hour

Penetration: -2

Power: 12

Effect: Physical Damage

This highly concentrated and deadly venom is utilized by Awakened nova scorpions to kill their prey. Though slow-acting, this toxin is quite often lethal; luckily, several commercial antivenins are available.

African relatives. Unlike those solitary insectivores, the Awakened variant is nearly twice the size, pack-oriented, and far more predatory. Further, while the mundane specimen is nocturnal, the Awakened variant is primarily diurnal.

The Awakened aardwolf is a preferential scavenger. In some instances, these animals use their inherent stealth to carefully steal a large portion of kills from more aggressive predators. The skillful use of the concealment ability is clearly crucial the species' survival.

In the absence of carrion, the *novalis* species is a particularly effective pack hunter. Packs of up to thirty specimens use stealth in conjunction with speed to flush out and capture a variety of prey. These packs most commonly capture small rodents, but there are recorded instances of them successfully capturing herd animals—both wild and domestic. Reports of attacks on metahumans are entirely anecdotal.

Packs of aardwolves are generally a cautious lot. While they are perfectly willing to attack large targets, they are also quick to withdraw from the hunt if the prey seems capable of defending itself. If one or more members of the pack are injured, they will generally move on to a different target. Packs seldom intrude near metahuman settlements, save during extreme weather conditions that may drive the packs from their territory.

Aardwolves are territorial. Members of a pack will routinely mark the boundaries of their domain using their anal glands. Most packs are dominated by a single male in a manner far more consistent with grey wolves than with the mundane aardwolf. Two to three cubs per breeding-age female are born early each summer. Cubs stay with the pack until the dawn of the following spring, at which time they generally join a different pack.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	4	5	3	1	4	2	2	1	6	4	9	1

Movement: 15/75

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Concealment (Self), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)

ARTNWERRE

Canis lupus arwegares dingo

Habitat: Many different environments

Range: Australia

Frequency: Common

Identification: The artnwerre is an Awakened dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*) that is slightly taller than the mundane species, averaging 75 centimeters and massing 30 kilograms. It is lighter in color, almost sandy with white hair on its feet and tail.

Habits: Artnwerres are for the most part lone creatures, though they belong to packs with which they rendezvous every few days for socializing or mating. Packs usually stay small: eight to twelve members of both artnwerre and dingo. They are intelligent and adaptable, learning to avoid mana storms and living in the urban blight. They are preferential carnivores that will target a variety of prey based upon availability. Artnwerre aren't very vocal; they don't bark, and rarely do they howl. Artnwerres are believed to freely interbreed with dingoes, but it is impossible to tell by observation because they are so similar in features and manners.

When hunting, they size up their prey's defense before attacking. Artnwerre hunt small game if alone or work in a mixed pack of dingoes and artnwerre to target larger game like kangaroos. Studies of their behavior have shown that they

can communicate telepathically, and a pack may move to intercept prey spotted by a solitary member. Artnwerre do not usually bother metahumans unless they are extremely hungry. Artnwerres have been known to exploit pack tactics by distracting metahuman guards while the rest of the pack preys upon unguarded domestic animals.

Artnwerre have pups once annually in litters of up to three pups. They give birth in dry creek beds or abandoned burrows. The pups mature quickly and are juveniles within four months and leave the pack to hunt on their own or forge a new pack in less than a year.

The artnwerre species is threatened by competition for food from feral cats and red foxes as well as by mana storms. While the dingo can be found in Southeast Asia, the artnwerre can be found only in Australia. There has been some success in taming artnwerres for use in security and in exploiting their ability to track for search and rescue.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	5	3	3	1	4	2	3	2	6	3	7	1

Movement: 10/20

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Running 2, Shadowing 2, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Smell), Immunity (Fire), Search, Mind Link (Artnwerre, Dingo)

EYEKILLER

Bubovermis fulminis

Habitat: Deserts and scrublands

Range: Western North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The adult eyekiller is a flightless bird over 7 meters in length from its beak to the end of its long tail. Fully grown specimens typically weigh in at 200 kilograms. Eyes that are each over 30 centimeters in diameter dominate their owl-like heads. The body is covered in grey or brown feathers which gradually become more hair-like along the lower body. Eyekillers' wings are vestigial, less than 10 centimeters in length, and entirely concealed by their body feathers. The snake-like tail is nearly 3 meters in length.

Habits: These nocturnal predators almost always hunt in mated pairs. Though they will sometimes scavenge, they show a clear preference for live prey. In order to maintain their heightened metabolism, these animals hunt constantly. Prey animals can be up to 100 kilograms in weight, though eyekillers are otherwise unselective about their prey. When hunting, these birds emit an electric impulse from their blackened beaks that generally stuns their prey. They then move in to finish the job with their rending claws.

Much like the owls that it superficially resembles, an eyekiller relies heavily upon its hearing to track prey. The contoured feathers around its head effectively conduct sound, allowing this animal to easily hear movement, respiration, or vocalizations from several hundred meters away.

During the day, eyekillers sleep in caves, burrows that they have dug, or in the shelter of rock formations that these birds construct.

Eyekillers mate for life. A mated female lays two eggs in an underground burrow each spring. The eggs hatch three weeks later, when the chicks dig their way free from the burrow. Chicks mature to adulthood over the following summer and often hunt with their parents during that time. Hunting can be even more aggressive



during early summers, as the chicks have even more voracious appetites than adult specimens.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
6 4 3 6 1 4 3 3 2 6 5 7 1

Movement: 10/40

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon (Electrical Discharge) 4, Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Running 4, Shadowing 2, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Elemental Attack (Electricity), Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision), Natural Weapon (Claws: 5P, AP 0)

METAROO

Macropus scire

Habitat: The same regions as mundane kangaroos, throughout the grasslands and scrublands of the Australian outback

Range: Australia

Frequency: Common

Identification: At most times, a metaroo is indistinguishable from a mundane red kangaroo (*Macropus rufus*). Fully grown male metaroos average 2 meters in height and weigh about 90 kilograms. Their fur has a red-brown tinge that fades to a pinkish white along their extremities. Their 20 centimeter-long ears are in constant motion. Like mundane kangaroos, they have disproportionately large hind legs and feet that are used for their hopping locomotion. These limbs are also used to kick when they are forced to defend themselves.

Habits: As a diurnal, obligate herbivore, the metaroo is most active during early morning hours, but it remains active throughout the day. Mobs of kangaroos interspersed with metaroos spend most of their days grazing. In rare cases, a mob can reach over 1,000 members. However, most usually have less than fifty members. Mobs generally stay within several kilometers unless predators or environmental conditions force them to relocate.

Metaroos are particularly distinguished from mundane kangaroos by their speed and ability to sense magical anomalies. However, their ability to sense such anomalies is entirely non-selective. A free spirit passing through an area will spook a metaroo every bit as effectively as an all out magical attack. In either case, metaroos will rapidly flee from the magical presence.

One consequence of their rapid movement rate is that metaroos are much less cautious than typical kangaroos. They will often continue to graze in a region, knowing that they have the ability to escape after all other animals have fled. Hardened veterans of the Australian outback will watch for times when a few metaroos are the only animals around. When that happens, it's usually an indicator that something dangerous is nearby.

Metaroo reproductive habits are identical to those of mundane red kangaroos. They have no fixed mating seasons. A single joey is born at a time and carried in its mother's pouch until maturation, which takes about eighteen months.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
3 5 4 4 2 3 1 4 2 6 4 7 1

Movement: 17/55

Skills: Gymnastics 3 (Jumping +2), Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Animal Control (Kangaroos), Magic Sense, Movement (Self)

ROAD RACER

Geococcyx californianus paisanus

Habitat: Deserts and arid regions

Range: Southwestern deserts of North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The road racer is a large, slender ground bird. It stands 75 centimeters tall and can weigh up to a half kilogram. It has dark and light brown stripes on its body with a lighter colored belly and a red spiky crest. The road racer has a long thin beak, and like others of the cuckoo family, it has two toes pointing forward and two toes pointing back. Its wings are short and rounded, with light colored primary feathers. Although it's capable of flight, it prefers to run on the ground.

Habits: The road racer is the Awakened cousin of the greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*). Like their progenitors, they are omnivores and opportunistic hunters. They feed on lizards, small mammals, insects, and plants—particularly cactus pears. They run after fleeing prey or jump in the air after insects. They are also known to fly in order to hurl prey such as snakes to the ground.

Road racers can travel at extremely high speeds by foot, and they are known to be compulsive creatures of habit, traveling the same routes at the same time every day. Because of this, some groups living or working away from civilization in the desert have used road racers as messenger birds.

Road racers are also obsessive packrats that are attracted to shiny objects, often stealing objects that they come across. Some are smart enough to recognize metahumans as owners of such objects; these road runners will watch to see if they drop anything and then run to quickly steal it. As an example of a road racer's obsessiveness, a nest was found with four pairs of sunglasses, a dozen lug nuts, and 300 shell casings.

Road racers mate for life, and they have two to six eggs per clutch. Both parents care for the offspring, with at least one parent at the nest at all times. Hatchlings leave the nest when they are six weeks old, though for a few days afterwards they will forage with their parents.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
1 4 5 1 1 4 3 5 2 6 3 9 1

Movement: 25/45

Skills: Flight 2, Perception 3, Running 4, Shadowing 2

Powers: Concealment (Self), Movement (Self)

Weaknesses: Fragile (1)

SAND CHAMELEON

Chamaeleo desertus

Habitat: Among the plant life surrounding desert oases

Range: African deserts

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: Sand chameleons can grow in excess of a meter in length with another 30 centimeters in tail length. At full growth, these lizards weigh about 40 kilograms. Its bulbous eyes protrude from either side of its head and scan for prey independently. The sand chameleon's coloration constantly changes to blend in with its background. A spiny ridge runs along its spine. The lizard's spindly limbs jut out from its body, giving its stance a fragile appearance.

Habits: Sand chameleons are primarily diurnal predators. In spite of the fact that they are cold-blooded, these creatures manage to become active any time prey is available. They lay in wait near

oases—often among plants, but sometimes with all but their eyes and nostrils buried beneath sand—for the approach of prey.

Though they can subsist on insects, small birds, and rodents, these sizeable lizards are aggressive in prey selection. They will attack virtually any animal that approaches up a size of 150 kilograms, including metahumans. Small prey are quickly snared by a sand chameleon's sticky tongue and then consumed. For larger prey, it makes no attempt to use its tongue. Instead, it attempts to rip off mouthfuls in a similar manner to an alligator's hunting technique.

Sand chameleons are solitary and extremely territorial. Only the largest oases will support more than a few specimens. When a habitat is intruded upon by another sand chameleon of the same gender, a battle invariably ensues. The loser will relocate, often traveling for over a week through the desert in search of another oasis.

Sand chameleons mate opportunistically. After mating, the female buries her eggs in the sand near the waterline. Both parents then depart to establish new hunting grounds, leaving the old oasis open to the hatchlings. Young hatch about two months later, and they are completely on their own for survival.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	3	5	4	1	4	1	3	1	6	3	9	2

Movement: 5/15

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Binding, Compulsion, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 5P, AP 0)

SHADOW CRAWLER

Latrodectus obscura

Habitat: Forested areas, rocky outcroppings, or abandoned buildings

Range: Australia

Frequency: Common

Identification: The shadow crawler is an Awakened descendent of the common redback spider. These grow much larger than their parental species. When standing normally, this black spider is about 15 centimeters in diameter from leg tip to leg tip. Like the redback, the abdomen of the female shadow crawler bears a bright red streak. Male shadow crawlers lack the red streak and are only about 4 centimeters in diameter. Shadow crawlers can also be identified when feeding—during feeding, they glow with a faint pale purple light.

Habits: Shadow crawlers are dual-natured predators. They spin webs that are effective at catching prey in both the physical and astral realms. Though there is no evidence that these species are Infected, they feed by draining life force in the same manner as most Infected. Unlike those species, however, a shadow crawler is capable of feeding upon a spirit that lacks a physical form. Shadow crawler webs are a fibrous jumble with a dense region near the bottom where the spider that created the web dwells, often by an egg sac.

Large colonies of shadow crawlers have been observed. These colonies can include well over 100 specimens each. Though their typical prey is large insects, other spiders, and small lizards, the members of a large colony will often cooperate when killing and consuming much larger prey that approach. There are documented reports of cattle and even metahumans that were killed after inadvertently wandering into a shadow crawler colony.

Shadow crawlers practice sexual cannibalism. After mating, a female will consume the body of the male shadow crawler. The female will typically lay more than 100 eggs in her egg sac after mating. These hatch in about two weeks. Immature shadow crawlers weave a fine webbing that creates a sort of kite that carries them to a new hunting ground. When a prevailing wind carries many members of a birth cohort to the same location, they will often establish a new colony.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	4	4	1	1	3	1	4	1	2D6-1	4	7	2

Movement: 2/15

Skills: Assensing 2, Astral Combat 3, Climbing 1, Infiltration 3, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Binding, Dual Natured, Essence Drain, Gestalt Consciousness, Mystic Armor (3), Wall Walking

Weaknesses: Essence Loss, Fragile (1)

WOMBRICK

Vombatus pradae ursinus

Habitat: Networks of burrows dug under forests and mountainous regions

Range: Southeastern Australia and Tasmania

Frequency: Common

Identification: This low slung marsupial is well-constructed for a life of burrowing. Its front claws are shaped for digging, while its sharp incisors are suited to shredding roots. Its blunt snout fits compactly behind its limbs when burrowing, while its powerful hindquarters kick soil out of the way or hold the creature firmly in place. Mature wombricks are roughly 2 meters in length and can weigh over 400 kilograms. Their pelt is about 5 centimeters in length and dark brown to black over its entire body.

Habits: Wombricks spend the majority of their lives carving vast tunnel networks. These networks can house a small family, but they are often maintained by a solitary individual. They only venture above ground at night or on extremely overcast days. Such trips are always focused on feeding. Though these animals can take up to two weeks to fully digest a meal, their large size still requires a considerable intake of food. They'll sometimes supplement their diet of roots by foraging through gardens or markets in populated areas.

Wombricks are not aggressive, but they may attack intruders in their tunnels or retaliate against aggression. These creatures are notoriously slow moving and extremely resilient to damage. They have no natural predators, as they are simply too difficult to kill. Annually, over a dozen automotive fatalities are blamed on wombricks when a vehicle is destroyed by crashing into one, which generally occurs after dark. Wombricks are also extraordinarily stubborn in their movement patterns. They are far more likely to destroy an obstacle by traveling through it than go around it.

Wombricks mate in the spring. Females carry a single young in their pouch for about seven months after a month-long gestation. The opening of a wombrick pouch faces away from the mother's head to prevent the animal from hurling dirt on her young while digging.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
7	3	2	7	1	3	1	5	1	6	5	1

Movement: 2/15

Skills: Perception 1, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Hardened Armor (10)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

FRESH WATER

Freshwater lakes, streams, and rivers generally have a very different ecosystem from salt water. These waters are typically much shallower, and creatures must be adapted to the lack of salinity.

DEVIL JACK DIAMOND

Lepisosteus adamantiscus

Habitat: Rivers and lakes

Range: Mississippi River and its tributaries

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The devil jack diamond is a fish species with an average length of 3 meters and weight of 150 kilograms. It has a large mouth with twenty-eight small teeth on top and eighteen larger teeth on the bottom. It has top-mounted eyes and an olive colored dorsal shading that fades to yellow on the underbelly. Its back is broad, flat, and covered in heavy scales.

Habits: While the devil jack diamond is an Awakened pike (*Esox fuds*), the changes are significant enough to warrant a new classification. It feeds predominantly on other fish, particularly the large Mississippi catfish. It is a solitary hunter, though there have been reports of devil jacks cooperating to hunt. If more than one is present, then they typically fight to establish dominance before any other activity, even in the presence of prey. Devil jack diamonds have the unusual habit of floating on the surface like an alligator, with a little bit of its back awash. In this position, it can be mistaken for a floating log or a dead specimen. The devil jack diamond is extremely fast and agile for its size, and it can challenge the other Awakened pike, the spitting pike, for speed.

Any movement in the water can attract a devil jack and put it into a frenzied state. Boats and even metahuman swimmers will attract the devil jack diamond and almost guarantee an attack.

The devil jack diamond is the new premiere catch for extreme sports fishing. It's a challenge because of its tough armor plating, strength, and agility. More than one fisherman has been injured in this sport.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
5	4	5	5	2	3	1	2	2	6	4	8	1

Movement: 20/60 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 3, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (4/4), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 5P, AP 0)

FIDEAL

Scyphozoa fidealis

Habitat: Freshwater lakes

Range: Global

Frequency: Common

Identification: These freshwater jellyfish are nearly invisible when submerged. Their large amoeboid bodies can exceed 50 centimeters in diameter. Their tendrils, which descend from the body, can exceed 75 centimeters in length. Fideals that have recently fed will often contain the remains of their most recent prey until they finish digesting them. Often, the sight of a fish skeleton floating just below the water's surface is the best indicator of a fideal's presence.

Habits: Since fideals are slow-moving animals, they are solitary, opportunistic predators. These invertebrates depend upon their translucent appearance to bring them into contact with unsuspecting prey animals. To facilitate this, fideals are generally

found in highly trafficked areas, particularly among the marshy shallows near shore.

While these jellyfish are adept at capturing aquatic animals that swim beneath them, they are also capable of preying upon any terrestrial animals that come in contact with them or enter the water within reach of their tendrils. Though they lack visual or auditory organs, fideals can sense movement in the water. If a creature moves nearby—or steps into the fideal—they can quickly snare it in their tendrils and attempt to engulf it. At that point, non-aquatic animals begin to drown and any victim falls prey to the fideal's powerful digestive enzymes.

The fideal's digestive system is unable to digest metals and ceramics. It is also slow to work on exceptionally hardened plastics and bones. Though it will eventually expel these indigestible substances, they can remain in the fideal's body for some time. This presence is the most common way to identify a specimen in the wild.

Fideals reproduce by binary fission when prey is abundant. The two smaller fideals instinctively move apart to reduce competition for prey animals.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	3	3	2	1	3	0	2	1	6	5	6	1

Movement: 2/5 (swimming)

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 2, Swimming 1, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Concealment (Self), Corrosive Spit, Engulf, Enhanced Senses (Motion Detection), Regeneration

Weaknesses: Reduced Senses (Hearing, Vision), Vulnerability (Fire)

Note: +1 Reach

HELLBENDER

Cryptobranchus pollutus

Habitat: Hellbenders are found in active freshwater rivers

Range: Mississippi river and its tributaries

Frequency: Common

Identification: Hellbenders are one of the world's largest aquatic salamanders, reaching lengths in excess of 120 centimeters and weighing up to 10 kilograms. They are thickly bodied, with webbed claws and a powerful tail that is used in swimming. A mane of feathery gills that extend out for up to 10 centimeters flanks their rounded heads. Their coloration varies, often consistent with their native streambeds, from shades of pale grey to a dark brown.

Habits: Hellbenders are an Awakened species that derived from the mundane hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*). In an unusual event, every known specimen of the mundane variant is believed to have transformed in the months after the Awakening. The mundane species is now believed to be extinct. As hellbenders are typically exposed to high level of pollutants in the water, it's theorized that these contaminants may have been key to triggering the species-wide transformation.

These solitary aquatic salamanders are diurnal carnivores. Their diet consists primarily of small fish, water birds, and aquatic insects. Their ability to hunt depends heavily upon the neurotoxin that they secrete in a slimy layer over their skin. Though these creatures are nearly blind, they are extremely sensitive to changes in water movement. When they sense motion, they quickly move towards it, attempting to make contact with the object that triggered the motion. Any small animal that falls in contact with the



hellbender's neurotoxin is instantly paralyzed, whereupon the prey is devoured.

During their late summer breeding season, males dig out burrows and wait for female hellbenders to approach. They then attempt to drive the females into their selected burrows. Those that do so then deposit a gelatinous mass of up to 100 eggs over several days. The males fertilize the eggs, which hatch about two months later. Upon hatching, the young hellbenders are less than 2 centimeters in length and completely ravenous. They eat any food nearby, including other members of their birth cohort.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	3	3	3	1	3	1	2	1	6	5	6	1

Movement: 5/25 (swimming)

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Motion Detection), Immunity (Toxins), Venom (Vector: Contact, Speed: Immediate, Power: 6, Effect: Paralysis)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Unpolluted Water, Mild), Reduced Senses (Vision)

LAMBTON LIZARD

Salamandra lambtoni

Habitat: Small freshwater rivers and lakes.

Range: Southeastern North America, extending up the Atlantic coastline to the Hudson River

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: These massive salamanders can grow to a length of greater than 6 meters and weigh in excess of 1,500 kilograms. As encounters are often with a lizard that is partially submerged, many viewers will see only the dull grey plates of overlapping bone that armor the lambton lizard's back. If the animal's mouth is visible, the many whiskers that surround it instantly become visible. Its small eyes are recessed beneath the dorsal armor. A powerful tail and short legs allow the large creature to quickly swim through its native waters.

Habits: The lambton lizard is a diurnal aquatic carnivore. Its primary target prey are large fish, but it will attempt to eat virtually any animal that comes near it. Its typical hunting mechanism begins by brushing aquatic targets with its whiskers or by spitting its venom at airborne or terrestrial targets. Once the prey is incapacitated, the salamander moves closer and devours it, either swallowing it whole or tearing off bite-sized chunks.

Lambton lizards are solitary and territorial, aside from their late spring breeding periods. Encounters between two of these salamanders at any other time will lead to a violent confrontation. As a single one of these specimens can rapidly deplete all of the food sources from a region, these encounters are surprisingly common.

Though these lizards require submersion in freshwater for survival, they can travel up to a kilometer from water in search of prey and new hunting grounds, particularly after they have depleted a region. When traveling out of the water, lambton lizards are much slower moving and easily avoided by any metahuman. In spite of this fact, there have been metahuman fatalities on occasions when specimens have smashed their way into homes.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
7	4	4	5	1	4	1	3	1	6	8	1

Movement: 5/25 (swimming)

Skills: Infiltration 2, Exotic Ranged Weapon 3, Perception 2, Shadowing 3, Swimming 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (3/5), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 6P, AP -1), Venom (Vector: Contact, Speed: Immediate, Power: 9, Effect: Paralysis)

Note: +2 Reach, Lambton lizards can spit their venom at a range of up to 5 meters as an Exotic Ranged Weapon attack or make a touch-only attack to apply the venom with its whiskers.

SPLITTING PIKE

Esox sputare

Habitat: Brackish and freshwater in lakes and slow moving, rocky waters

Range: Northern Hemisphere (Quebec, Algonkian-Manitou Council, Northern CAS, waters around United Kingdom and Finland, and the Baltic Sea)

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The spitting pike is a fish species that continues to grow throughout its lifetime. Its average length is around 150 centimeters with a weight of 50 kilograms. It has a large mouth with 28 small teeth on top and 18 large teeth on the bottom. It has top-mounted eyes, and it is olive colored, which shades to yellow on the underbelly.

Habits: The spitting pike is an Awakened species of the common pike (*Esox lucius*). It continues to grow as long as food is plentiful and space remains available. The largest specimen caught was in 2048 in the UK. It was 371 centimeters long and massed 213.4 kilograms.

It is an aggressive nocturnal predator, striking out at the side of prey to paralyze it with its sharp teeth. It will eat other fish, frogs, and birds or anything that goes near the water. Spitting pikes are also cannibalistic, as they are highly territorial.

It is called a spitting pike due to its ability to spit venom at prey. It forces a mixture of water and venom with its tongue and gills along a groove on the roof of its mouth. The spitting pike tries to blind its prey, and while the prey is thrashing in the water, the spitting pike will bite and tear at vital spots.

The spitting pike greedily attacks and kills more prey than it can eat, tearing apart its victims. Because of this, rivers and lakes have been decimated by the spitting pike. Governments have sponsored angler clubs to help exterminate spitting pike and preserve other native species. Due to its size, the spitting pike has become a reasonably popular European delicacy. And like fugu, a chef has to be licensed to prepare the spitting pike due to the risks imposed by its poison glands.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	5	4	2	2	4	1	2	2	6	4	8	1

Movement: 15/30 (swimming)

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon 3, Perception 3, Swimming 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Corrosive Spit, Engulf (Water), Enhanced Senses (Depth Perception), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP -1), Venom (Vector: Contact, Speed: 1 Combat Turn, Power: 4, Effect: Physical Damage, Blindness)

Note: -1Reach. For each additional meter of the spitting pike's length, increase its Body and Strength by 1.

GRASSLANDS

Vast rolling fields of grasses, flowers, and herbs with little or no tree growth characterize this environment. Water is usually readily available, though the absence of trees and hills can lead to extreme weather conditions.

CENTAUR

Equus Sagittarius

Habitat: A rural existence in plains and forested environments

Range: North America, Europe, and Asia

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: A centaur is an equine-like species. Its lower torso resembles that a horse, with four legs ending in hooves. Its upper torso, where the head and neck would be on a horse, resembles a primate with long arms ending in three digits and an opposable thumb. The centaur's head is vaguely equine, with an extended cranium and long neck. A centaur stands an average of 275 centimeters at the shoulder and weighs around 450 kilograms. Color patterns are similar to horses, ranging from black to white, cream, and brown with various mottled patterns.

Habits: Centaurs are a sapient species who live a simple communal lifestyle. While they have their own language and simple tools and weapons, they are capable of understanding and using human language, tools, and technology. Centaur traditions and beliefs are predominantly shamanistic, with some centaurs having magical talent. Centaurs are omnivores that will hunt and forage as well as grow a few crops. Centaur families live in tent-like round houses which are proportional to their needs. They have monogamous relationships and extended nuclear families, as they take care of and respect their elders. Centaurs have a longer gestation period than metahumans and birth only one foal a year.

Centaur populations can be found around the world, with the largest population centers in Greece. Due to mixed governmental rights and pollution, centaurs have to work to find locations that can suit their lifestyle. Some centaurs are curious about metahuman society, and they interact with metahumans to find employment and education even though they are ill-suited for life in urban environments. A rare few flourish in metahuman society. Unfortunately, this has a downside, as a generation of the centaur population is being introduced to drugs, alcohol, and technological stresses that they weren't exposed to in their own society.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	1	6	1	6	1

Movement: 30/80

Skills: Close Combat Group 2, Etiquette 3 (Tribal +2), Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Running 4, Outdoors Group 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Magic Sense, Sapience, Search

Weaknesses: Uneducated

Note: Current International Status: The NAN, Greece, the Czech Republic, Amazonia, Yakut, and Mongolia all recognize centaurs as sapient beings and allow them full citizenship.

COCKATRICE

Gallus lapidaris

Habitat: Open grasslands and scrublands, though escaped animals have established communities in a broad range of environments

Range: Native to Western Europe but spread globally



Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: These large flightless birds are typically 2 meters in height from foot to head, with an additional 1-meter tail. They average about 40 kilograms in weight. Their plumage is primarily yellow to orange, though the comb atop their head is a bright red. Their blue tail and legs are featherless. Initially believed to be a relative of the mundane emu, recent genotyping has shown that they are in fact an Awakened chicken.

Habits: The cockatrice is an aggressively predatory bird. Though flightless, they are capable of leaping up to 10 meters, which is crucial to their predation. When attacking, the creatures will leap into the air, swinging their tail forward to paralyze their prey. Once a victim is paralyzed, the birds will use their talons to kill. These animals are not selective hunters—any animal up to 80 kilograms in weight may be targeted.

In the wild, flocks of cockatrices often hunt as a group. Flocks generally consist of less than twenty members, but during droughts multiple flocks may congregate into groups of over a hundred specimens. These large flocks will sometimes hunt together to bring down extremely large prey animals, and they can pose a threat to nearby metahuman settlements.

These animals are often used for security purposes. Though naturally diurnal, in security use they are often allowed to roam in brightly lit fenced areas at night and return to rest in a darkened habitat during the day. Guard specimens are imprinted on their handlers from hatching, and they become extremely protective of their handlers.

Wild specimens breed in the spring, with clutches that typically number twelve in size. Newborn chicks are capable of traveling with the flock, by which they are fiercely guarded.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	5	3	4	1	3	2	2	1	6	4	6	1

Movement: 15/70

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 2, Running 4, Shadowing 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Immunity (Own Touch), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 2P, AP 0), Paralyzing Touch (Tail)

JUGGERNAUT

Dasypus praegrandis

Habitat: Wherever their whims might take them

Range: Southern and central regions of North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The juggernaut is an unstoppable force that strongly resembles a dramatically enlarged specimen of its mundane relative, the common armadillo (*Dasypus praegrandis*). These specimens can exceed 14 meters in length and weigh well over 7,000 kilograms. A shell very similar to that of the mundane armadillo protects its enormous body, and it shares that animal's poor eyesight. While the juggernaut's claws are shaped for digging, their 110-centimeter length leaves them quite effective as weapons.

Habits: A juggernaut's metabolism is complex and amazing. These animals are capable of digesting virtually anything, including complex inorganic compounds. These mammals constantly devour everything in sight, including seemingly random swaths of earth.

A consequence of this unique metabolism is that a juggernaut can function for several hours without air. This permits these terrorists to hunt a stream or lakebed even though they are incapable of swimming due to their bone density. In the absence of fresh air, juggernauts do operate more slowly; however, their size and strength often seem to more than compensate for this limitation.

In spite of their inherently flexible dietary needs, juggernauts remain diurnal, territorial predators. They are extremely aggressive and determined in their hunting but not at all selective in their prey choice. Essentially, any motion that they sense is enough to whet their appetites. Once a juggernaut has selected a target, it will pursue aggressively for hours, relying upon its sensitive smell to follow a trail for up to 15 kilometers. Along the way, the juggernaut will continuously feed and leave a rampant trail of destruction. Only an environment that is rich enough in prey to assuage its hunger will distract a juggernaut from its original target.

Due to their aggressive nature, little is confirmed about juggernaut mating habits. No juggernauts have been successfully kept in captivity. Many regions offer valuable bounties for juggernaut hides.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
17	6	5	42	1	3	1	9	4	6	6	8	2

Movement: 15/45

Skills: Perception 2, Running 5, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Devouring, Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Smell, Motion Detection), Fear, Hardened Armor (12), Immunity (Cold, Fire, Pathogens, Toxins), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 24P, AP -3)

Note: +4 Reach

PEGASUS

Equus volatilis amplius

Habitat: Grasslands and plains

Range: Southern and Central Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The pegasus is a winged horse, as described in Greek myth. It stands 180 centimeters at the shoulder and averages 350 kilograms. Just behind and above the forelegs is a pair of strong bird-like wings. When extended, the horse's wingspan is almost 8 meters. A pegasus is covered in short fur that is usually white or roan. The feathers of the wings match the pegasus' coat.

Habits: The pegasus is given the equus phenotype. While it can fly, the rest of its morphology matches that of a horse. The dynamics of flight for a pegasus involves a short running hop to get enough air beneath its wings to generate lift.

Pegasi are herbivores that eat a considerable amount of vegetation. They will raid orchards for fruits, since fences are no barrier for them. They congregate in loosely affiliated herds of ten to twenty-five animals for mutual safety while grazing. During breeding season, pegasi can have one foal a year or twins on rare occasions. While they are a precocial species, the pegasus foal will be able to only run after a few minutes, not fly. For six to eight months, at least one member of the breeding pair stays on the ground to protect their foal until its wings strengthen enough for it to fly. Because of this, poachers try to capture pegasi in the springtime after they have given birth. The pegasus has a short migratory pattern from Central Europe in the summer to Southern Europe (Italy and Greece) in winter.

Aetherpedia Query: Peryton

The closest relative to the pegasus is the peryton. The peryton is a winged deer, just over 150 centimeters tall at the shoulder and weighing 150 kilograms. It has an average wingspan of 550 centimeters. The peryton sports large antlers, and its incisors are more pronounced. Unlike the pegasus, however, the peryton is an omnivore that has been known to swoop down on defenseless metahumans, knocking them to the ground with its antlers. It can then trample prey with its hooves and bite at its victims with its sharp teeth.

The only serious threat to pegasi has been a large black market for winged horses. Nations have been forced to put the breed on the endangered species list, even though they're illegal to own in many countries. They are difficult to breed in captivity, which also fuels the black market.

B **A** **R** **S** **C** **I** **L** **W** **EDG** **ESS** **M** **Init** **IP**
8 5 6 7 2 4 2 3 2 6 4 10 2

Movement: 40/90 (flying/running)

Skills: Flight 4, Perception 3, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Fruit)

UNICORN

Unicornis validus

Habitat: With wild horses in open grasslands

Range: Global

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: A unicorn resembles a horse with a single meter-long horn extending from the center of its forehead. Though commonly pure white, unicorns often have colors and markings similar to the horses with which they interbreed.

Habits: Unicorns are diurnal herbivores. They travel through open grasslands, grazing until a region has been depleted or predators intrude. Though solitary encounters are common, these animals are most often found in the company of a small herd of mundane wild horses. They are not easily tamed, and captivity dramatically shortens their lifespan. Unicorns are not territorial, but they will fight if cornered.

Unicorns preferentially interbreed with horses, which has led to substantial argument about their scientific classification. Further, each small group of horses will never have more than a single adult unicorn, suggesting that common unicorns do not breed with one another. A unicorn's horn does not begin to develop until it achieves maturity during its second year of life.

Only about a third of unicorns' offspring develop into unicorns. Similarly, a small percentage of mundane horses give birth to unicorns annually. The metagenes associated with unicorn development have been identified, but cloning attempts have universally failed.

Unicorn horns are prized by enchanters. Though unicorn poaching is illegal in most jurisdictions, there remains an active talislegging trade.

B **A** **R** **S** **C** **I** **L** **W** **EDG** **ESS** **M** **Init** **IP**
7 5 5 7 4 4 2 4 2 6 5 9 1

Movement: 25/120

Skills: Counterspelling 6, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Immunity (Pathogens), Magical Guard, Natural Weapon (Horn: DV 5P, AP -1)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Pollutants, Severe)

Note: +1 Reach

WHITE BUFFALO

Bison bison blanc

Habitat: Plains and grasslands

Range: North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The white buffalo is an Awakened subspecies of the plains bison (*Bison bison bison*), though it is considerably larger. It averages 3 meters at the shoulder, 530 centimeters in length, and a weight of 1,300 kilograms. It's a stocky and powerful creature with a brilliant white coat; its short horns are grey, shading to dark brown or black at the tips.

Habits: The white buffalo is an herbivore that grazes the plains and prairies throughout North America. The white buffalo is often seen as the dominant member of a plains bison herd. White buffalo make up about less than 1 percent of the plains bison population, which is roughly ten million today thanks to NAN-funded repopulation programs.

The white buffalo can interbreed with its progenitors, but their offspring do not necessarily express the white coloration. These offspring also do not inherit the Awakened abilities of the white buffalo, but they will be almost the same size as their Awakened parents. Female white buffalo will have one offspring a year, similar to the plains bison's reproductive habits. The white buffalo bull is also polygamous, with a small harem of both white buffalo and plains bison.

This species is more territorial and aggressive than a plains bison, often charging at intruders near the herd. While the white buffalo will give a few warning charges, it will butt and trample creatures as large as a troll if the threat doesn't leave. Against larger numbers of predators, the white buffalo can move the herd like an army, getting them to flank and maneuver around to their advantage either to trample the predators or forcibly block and

Aetherpedia Query: Unicorn Variants

The greater unicorn (*Unicorn magnus*) is primarily differentiated by the fact that they live together rather than in the company of mundane horses. These variants are more resistant to pollution, though they tend to dwell among mountains.

The water buffalo unicorn (*Bubalis unicornis*) is believed to be an unrelated Awakened species found in the Southeast Asia. In addition to a single horn, this specimen also has a dense chitinous armor interspersed with its fur.

The Red Deer Unicorn (*Cervus unicornis*) is found throughout the forests of Europe and Asia Minor, associating with mundane Red Deer as the common unicorn associates with horses.

push them off of a cliff. White buffaloes frequently hold dominant positions in buffalo herds, regardless of sex.

The white buffalo is a mythologically significant symbol among many Amerindian plains tribes. They believe that the reappearance of the white buffalo symbolized their return to power in North America. It is against the law in the NAN to kill or disturb the white buffalo. The Koshari have even sponsored hits on known white buffalo poachers. It's also illegal to possess a white buffalo hide, even if it died of natural causes. The exception to this are several treaties on white buffalo hide.

The white buffalo has a low tolerance to air and water pollutants, which may explain their lower numbers. Pollution cleanup of several areas in NAN territory continues proactively in an effort to increase the white buffalo population. White buffaloes have been documented to live over 30 years, double the lifespan of its progenitor, if it can avoid polluted locations. Any subsistence or ceremonial hunts for bison are carefully monitored so as not to disturb white buffaloes.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
9	3	4	8	3	4	2	3	2	6	8	1

Movement: 10/45

Skills: Intimidation 3, Perception 2, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Animal Control (Buffalo), Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Smell), Immunity (Pathogens), Search

Weaknesses: Allergy (Pollutants, Severe)

OPEN OCEAN

Beyond the continental shelf, the ocean becomes darker and much deeper. In these areas of ocean, below 100 meters, there is a perpetual twilight with limited sunlight. At the surface, massive swarms of small plant life exploit the sun's energy, and other animals prey upon them. In the depths, energy comes from thermal vents and the decomposing remains of creatures that live near the surface.

DEVILFISH

Manta phobi

Habitat: Tropical oceans

Range: As far north as California Free State, Southern Florida, and the Gulf of Mexico and as far south as the coasts of Amazonia

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The devilfish is a manta ray with a wingspan of 8 meters that weighs roughly 2,000 kilograms. Its dorsal surface is black with white markings on the ventral. It has a raised spine and a slightly elongated tail that is tipped with a venomous spine. They have two sets of sharp tiny teeth.

Habits: The devilfish is an Awakened species of manta ray (*Manta birostris*). While the mundane variant is a filter feeder, the devilfish gulps down smaller fish. It's a quick swimmer that hunts by flapping towards a school of fish and sucking the fish in like a vacuum. The devilfish can also leap from the water and glide. It can leap up to 12 meters into the air and typically glide for 70 meters, though glides of over 100 meters have been caught by early warning satellites. If it detects a school of fish nearby, this ray will leap from the water and land heavily on the school. The impact stuns the fish, allowing the devilfish to feed with little exertion. When the large ray slaps back down onto the water's surface, the sound made by this hunting technique can be heard several kilometers away. The sheer mass

that the devilfish can move allows it to inflict significant damage to objects up to the size of a small boat.

While not hunting, it swims leisurely a few meters below the surface. Divers can sometimes hitch a ride with a devilfish by hanging onto the front margin of its body. Unlike a normal manta ray, the devilfish has a stinger, and it will whip its tail at the offending target if agitated or provoked.

Devilfish give birth to one to two young after a gestation period of fourteen months. Devilfish offspring weigh 10 kilograms at birth. These young mature over five years, and they can live up to fifteen years in the wild.

The devilfish name comes from fishermen who would compete with these rays for fish. The anglers would often feel a sense of foreboding that could lead to them cutting their nets to get away.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
11	3	5	8	2	3	2	4	2	6	4	8	1

Movement: 25/60 (swimming)

Skills: Gymnastics 3 (Jumping +2), Perception 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Fear, Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: 5 Combat Turns, Power: 5, Effect: Physical Damage, Nausea)

KRAKEN

Architeuthis megagiganteus

Habitat: Oceans

Range: Global, although the highest population density is off the Antarctic continental shelf

Frequency: Rare

Identification: Krakens are enormous cephalopods that are most often mistaken for small floating islands. Its streamlined head and body can exceed 25 meters in length. Ten of its twelve tentacles are each over 30 meters in length. The other two, more specialized tentacles terminate in manipulative oval pads that are roughly 40 meters long. Though no specimens have been captured alive, their weight is estimated as over 15,000 kilograms. A kraken is primarily white, but it can be mottled with blues and browns. Its head is armored with a calcium exoskeleton, and a powerful beak extends from its ventral surface.

Habits: As the majority of a kraken's lifecycle occurs in the deepest parts of the ocean, metahumans know very little about it. Most metahuman interactions with krakens occur at the ocean surface, particularly over deep water. Solitary specimens are attracted to oceangoing vessels. They attack these vessels—presumably mistaking them for a prey animal—and often succeed in sinking them. Except for military ships, there are very few vessels capable of effectively defending against a kraken attack.

Reported kraken attacks on ships are rare. There were only six confirmed attacks reported in 2071. However, only one of those six ships survived the encounter.

No kraken has ever been captured alive. An analysis of the remains of a specimen that attacked the *Ares Apollo* supercarrier in 2048 has been used for most anatomical analyses. Genotyping data confirms that the kraken is an Awakened variant of the colossal squid. Analysis of that specimen's digestive tract showed the remains of a beaked whale along with several pieces of the *Apollo's* hull plating. Sucker scars and a digestive analysis of beaked whale remains suggest that these animals may also feed on kraken. Frighteningly, the kraken that attacked the *Apollo* was female and had over 12,000 immature

and unfertilized eggs. It's assumed that only a very low percentage of kraken newborns survive to adulthood.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
13 5 4 20 1 3 3 5 1 6 3 7 1

Movement: 30/90 (swimming)

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 2, Shadowing 4, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Armor (9/12), Natural Weapon (Crush: DV 12P, AP -2)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

Note: +6 Reach

MEGALODON

Carcharodon neomegalodon

Habitat: Oceanic waters, off the continental shelf at depths of up to 750 meters

Range: Global

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: These enormous sharks can grow up to 16 meters in length and weigh over 35,000 kilograms. Their dorsal side is a dark blue-grey color that fades to a white ventral surface. An irregular pattern of black stripes is unique to each specimen and provides some additional camouflage. The shark's mouth can be 3 meters across, and it is filled with rows of jagged teeth that are constantly lost and refreshed.

Habits: These aggressive predators will attack virtually anything in the water. Like most sharks, the megalodon must swim constantly to keep water flowing across its gills. As it swims, it is always sensing for the presence of blood in the water. When it senses blood, it rapidly swims towards the source. In many instances, when a megalodon comes upon a smaller predator feeding, it will simply devour that predator in addition to its food. In instances where multiple megalodons are drawn to the same blood source, they may attack each other in a feeding frenzy.

Instances of single megalodons attacking boats are not uncommon. However, in some cases three to five megalodons will form a pack and hunt cooperatively. When this happens, these packs will target even larger objects. Packs of megalodons have killed great blue whales, and reports have noted that a pack once even attempted to attack the Sea Dragon. There are several confirmed instances of military vessels coming under attack by a pack of megalodons. In instances when a pack is already cooperating prior to finding prey, they are much less likely to enter a feeding frenzy.

These savage animals will attempt to eat anything in the water. This tendency to attack virtually anything has made it very difficult to identify any preferential prey animals. Necropsies performed on beached megalodon remains have found a huge variety of objects present in the animal's digestive tracts. While mermaid, tuna, dolphin, and squid remains were found, so were oil drums, life preservers, and in one instance, an entire motorcycle.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
15 5 5 12 1 3 1 3 2 6 5 8 2

Movement: 20/80 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 4, Shadowing 2, Swimming 4, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 6

Powers: Armor (6/8), Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 12P, AP -4), Regeneration

MEISTERSINGER

Megaptera palestrina

Habitat: Oceans and seas

Range: Global

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The meistersinger is an Awakened humpback whale averaging 26 meters in length and 55 metric tons in weight. It has elongated tail flukes and seven to twelve small dorsal humps instead of the dorsal fin as well as a distinctly larger cranium. It also has similar coloration as the mundane brethren.

Habits: The meistersinger is a gentle giant, swimming through the oceans filtering krill and small fish and singing their famous whale song. They are bothered only by the occasional whaling fleet mistaking a meistersinger for a humpback whale. Meistersingers move in pods of up to fifteen members as they hunt or mate. Females have a gestation period of twelve months, and they can produce offspring every two years. Normal humpback whales have been found to live over two hundred years. Meistersinger are posited to live longer than that.

Whaling fleets and cannery ships have been lost at sea because of the meistersinger. Footage has shown tsunami-sized waves engulfing ships and the massive whales denting hulls. A breaching meistersinger is a sight to see, though not for one recorded crew as its ship splintered under the impact of the meistersinger's body. It is unclear who initiated the recorded incident. Over eighty crew members have been confirmed as lost at sea due to such attacks. On the other hand, there are reports of meistersingers saving at least as many lives by helping sinking ships in cooperation with dolphins and sea lions or magically creating calm water in a storm.

While their song has not been understood, mages have been able to communicate with meistersingers through magical means. Translational and psychological issues make precise understanding impossible, but it is believed that they are historians who pass their stories along through their singing. Some say their knowledge and oral tradition goes back as long as most dragon lore. Some in the NAN have petitioned that the meistersinger be acknowledged as a sapient species and be given the same rights.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
20 5 4 20 4 4 3 5 3 6 6 8 1

Movement: 20/40 (swimming)

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon 4, Perception 5, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Animal Control (Fish, Aquatic Mammals), Compulsion, Engulf (Water), Enhanced Senses (Sonar), Fear, Immunity (Normal Weapons), Influence, Magic Sense, Mind Link, Natural Weapon (Breach: DV 9P, AP 0), Search, Sapience, Sonic Projection

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Krill), Uneducated

MERMAID

Merhomo illecebrae

Habitat: Temperate, subtropical, and tropical oceanic waters

Range: Global

Frequency: Common

Identification: The mermaid is an Awakened variant of the California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*). Its lower body and head closely resemble that of the mundane species. However, the



animal is clearly distinguished by its mane of flowing hair that runs down its back. Mermaids are also characterized by a pair of arms which end in four-fingered webbed and clawed hands that replace their front flippers. Both male and female mermaids possess pronounced mammae. Specimens are up to 210 centimeters in length and in excess of 350 kilograms in weight.

Habits: Mermaids are aggressive and fast-swimming marine predators. Their primary target prey are coastal fish and mollusks, but packs of mermaids can attack much larger prey, including metahumans. These marine mammals use a rapid undulating motion to approach their targets and then use their claws to inflict serious wounds. Small prey can be wolfed down whole, while larger prey animals are shredded into smaller pieces by the mermaids' forelimbs and teeth.

When targeting terrestrial swimmers such as metahumans, mermaids will generally drown their victims by grabbing them in their forelimbs and holding the prey underwater. As a mermaid can hold its breath for over an hour and multiple mermaids may work together against such prey, this hunting tactic is extremely effective. There have been confirmed reports of mermaids boarding small ships at sea and dragging crewmembers overboard to feed. When large mermaid packs have been observed, weather updates now include reports indicating regions to avoid.

Packs of mermaids travel and hunt in polygamous family groups of ten to thirty members. Several times annually, multiple groups merge for a few weeks and then divide into different groups. Though young will stay with their birth mother for the first year, afterwards they invariably join a different pack at the first opportunity. Unlike merrows, there is no evidence that mermaids are sapient. Though they do bark like sea lions, there is no indication that this barking constitutes a complex language, nor are mermaids tool users.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
4	5	7	6	1	4	2	3	2	6	11	1

Movement: 10/60 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Swimming 5, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 4P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Mercury)

NEW LEATHERBACK

Dermochelys novalis

Habitat: Deep oceans; they migrate to oceanfront beaches to lay and defend nests.

Range: Gulf of Mexico and tropical portions of the Atlantic Ocean

Frequency: Rare

Identification: These enormous sea turtles can grow in excess of 3 meters in length and up to 1,000 kilograms in weight. Like its mundane relatives, the leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the new leatherback's body is covered with a flexible carapace rather than a bony shell. The back of the "shell" is a dense, oily skin which also assists the turtle in regulating body temperature. The carapace is interspersed with small bones that offer structure and rigidity. All four limbs are powerful flippers, which make the new leatherback a deceptively fast swimmer.

Habits: New leatherbacks are believed to be predators, but their diet varies. Prey animals must be small enough for the animal

to swallow whole, as it lacks the teeth and claws necessary to effectively rend prey. It's worth noting that its bite is strong enough to break metahuman bones, and this certainly enables the turtle to defend itself when necessary. Nonetheless, the new leatherback's bite is not its primary defense mechanism. Instead, it depends upon its magical ability to compel a target to dive to the bottom of the ocean for its primary defense. Against aquatic predators, this gives the turtle ample time to escape. Against terrestrial predators, it tends to have lethal consequences.

These sea turtles are distinguished from all others by their mating practice. Though mating does occur at sea, a mated pair returns to the female's nesting beach together. There, the mother lays a clutch of over a hundred eggs, which she promptly buries in the dry sand beyond the highest point of the tide. Then for the next seventy days, the mated pair defends their nest against all intruders, primarily by compelling intruders to dive to the bottom of the ocean and stay there.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
8	3	3	5	4	3	2	3	2	6	4	6	1

Movement: 4/12 (swimming)

Skills: Counterspelling 4, Perception 2, Swimming 5, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Armor (4/7), Compulsion, Magical Guard, Movement, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Vulnerability (Mercury)

Note: A freshwater variant (*Dermochelys potami*) is rarely found in the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes.

STORM DOLPHIN

Delphinus periculosus

Habitat: Temperate seas and oceans

Range: North, Irish, and Baltic Seas

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The storm dolphin averages almost 3 meters in length and 75 kilograms in weight. Its dorsal surface is blue-black shading to gradually lighter colors on the ventral surface. It has a long beak with 60 interlocking teeth in its jaw.

Habits: The storm dolphin is an Awakened dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*). They live in extended family groups of six to twenty individuals. They are diurnal carnivores feeding on many species of fish and squid. They have also been observed swimming in mixed groups of other dolphins and whales. Storm dolphins can dive to depths of 300 meters and hold their breath for 15 minutes.

The species is endangered, as they suffer from a low fertility rate with many stillborn and unviable mutations, which is believed to be due to water pollution. Storm dolphins average one to two offspring every three years, and they are very protective of their children. Storm dolphins mature in four years, and they will usually stay with their birth pod. The lifespan of a storm dolphin is less than fifteen years because of its almost constant battles with metahumanity.

Storm dolphins are extremely hostile towards metahumanity. They often attack oil rigs, ships, and harbors. They approach under an unusual storm front that reduces visibility and use their Awakened powers of electrical projection to attack vessels and disrupt navigation. Storm dolphins can gather multiple pods into groups of up to a hundred members when attacking. The

storm dolphin will drown, shipwreck, and crash survivors when they attack.

Storm dolphins are highly intelligent, and they will sabotage vessels and stations by clogging vents, bending antennae, or chewing through or pulling free cabling. They have a limited understanding of tools, and they can flip levers or turn wheels. They are also highly sensitive and resistant to magic.

Because of their aggressiveness towards metahumans and threat to shipping, megacorporations sponsor storm dolphin hunts to protect corporate interests. This puts them at odds with TerraFirst!, which will defend storm dolphins at great risk to themselves. These groups continue in their efforts to establish some communication with the species.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
7	5	5	8	4	4	3	5	1	6	4	9	1

Movement: 30/60 (swimming)

Skills: Counterspelling 3, Exotic Ranged Weapon 3, Perception 3, Swimming 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Engulf (Water), Elemental Attack (Electricity), Enhanced Senses (Sonar), Magical Guard (Self), Magic Sense, Mind Link, Movement, Sapience, Weather Control

Weaknesses: Uneducated

TORPEDO SHARK

Portheus velocis

Habitat: Tropical and subtropical ocean waters at depths of up to 150 meters

Range: Pacific Ocean

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: This Awakened variant of the blue shark grows to 5 meters in length and up to 1,000 kilograms in weight. Its domed head is heavily armored by bony calcifications that give the shark a torpedo-like appearance. The shark's eyes and jaw are both set behind and protected by the large brow ridge. A torpedo shark is also unusual in its lack of a dorsal fin. Coloration can vary from black to a pale blue-grey.

Habits: The torpedo shark is a solitary predator that targets a broad range of prey animals. The majority of its diet consists of small squid and fish. However, its brow ridge is ideally suited for targeting much larger prey. Like many sharks, the torpedo shark is drawn to the smell of blood in the water. It can smell a few drops of blood, a clear indicator of a wounded prey animal, from a distance of several kilometers. The shark will then rapidly travel to the source of the blood.

The presence or absence of other predators in the area, especially other breeds of shark, determines the torpedo shark's next actions. If there are large predators present, this shark will often rapidly swim to its maximum speed and use its bony brow ridge to ram into an opponent. In this manner, another predator may be suddenly become its prey. If no other predators are present, the torpedo shark will devour smaller prey or use its ramming attack to finish off larger prey animals. In these situations, another torpedo shark is about the only predator that they will not attack. There are many reported instances of torpedo sharks mistaking small boats as predators in this situation and badly damaging them by ramming.

Torpedo sharks are unusual because they can remain motionless in the water. By moving its jaw, this species is capable of causing water to flow over its gills. Most sharks are required to always be in motion for respiration.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
7	5	4	8	1	3	1	3	1	6	7	2

Movement: 15/70 (swimming)

Skills: Perception 1, Swimming 5, Tracking 1, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Armor (3/5), Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Brow Ridge: DV 8P, AP 0)

UNICORN FISH

Monodon novalis

Habitat: Arctic waters, generally near the continental shelf

Range: Arctic Ocean

Frequency: Common

Identification: These whales can grow in excess of 4 meters in length with a single horn that protrudes from their forehead up to an additional 2 meters in length. A male unicorn fish can weigh over 1,500 kilograms, while females are markedly smaller at roughly 1,000 kilograms. These animals are dark gray on their dorsal sides, which fades to white on the ventral surface. Their horns are either stark white or pale golden in hue.

Habits: Not truly fish, the unicorn fish is an Awakened carnivorous whale related to the narwhal (*Monodon monceros*). While the narwhal's horn is actually a tusk, the unicorn fish's horn does protrude from its forehead like the horn of the common unicorn. Also unlike the narwhal, the unicorn fish is heavily dependent upon its horn for hunting. When a prey animal is found—this can include most fish and cetaceans—the aggressive whale charges and attempts to stab it with its horn. If the attempt is successful, the predator then scrapes its victim off on a nearby mass of ice or land before devouring it. Unsuccessful attempts are repeated until a prey animal dies or manages to escape.

Most unicorn fish encounters are with solitary animals. During the breeding season, however, very large pods—over 200 members—of unicorn fish can gather. These gatherings are an instinctive opportunity for the species to mate. Further, these pods can also coordinate hunts against much larger creatures during this time. In 2063, a large pod attacked and sunk a 20-meter fishing trawler. Similar encounters have been anecdotally noted but not confirmed.

Because they are marine mammals, unicorn fish are protected against hunting by international treaties that date back to the twentieth century. In spite of this fact, enchanters prize the horns of these animals. A unicorn fish that has lost its horn also loses its ability to hunt and quickly dies of starvation.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
7	4	4	8	1	4	2	3	1	6	3	8	1

Movement: 15/50 (swimming)

Skills: Counterspelling 4, Perception 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Sonar), Immunity (Pathogens), Magical Guard, Natural Weapon (Horn: DV 6P, AP -2)

RAINFOREST

These jungles, filled with tall trees, thrive in regions of year-round warmth. From 125 to 600 centimeters of rain fall annually, providing ideal conditions for rapid and constant growth. These environments have more variety of plant life than any other biome.

ALUFYE

Gromphadorhina Pax

Habitat: Jungle undergrowth

Range: West Africa

Frequency: Common

Identification: The alufye is a non-flying cockroach averaging 25 centimeters in length and 250 to 300 grams in weight with a golden or amber exoskeleton. Males can be distinguished from females by their longer and hairier antennae.

Habits: This massive beetle lives in decomposing leaf litter and rotting vegetation beneath African rainforests. They are omnivores, but they prefer grubs and old fruit. They mate every three months and produce between 20 and 120 pea-sized eggs which the female will protect as they hatch; this is unusual behavior for cockroaches. The eggs hatch after a sixty-day incubation. The nymphs reach maturity after about ten months, though this can take less time in hotter climates. Alufye can live for two to three years.

When threatened, the alufye will trill like a pigeon coo by forcing air through its breathing pores. The trilling sound often pacifies their predators, allowing the alufye to escape. This unfortunately doesn't help against fast predators like the lightning quick gomatia.

They are slow, docile, nearly odorless, and harmless, making them popular as pets. The price of alufye varies from 20 to 50 nuyen; as an Awakened species, there are special tariffs on selling alufye outside of Africa, and licensing is required to own one. Through legitimate channels, the alufye can be purchased for around 1,000 nuyen. It is illegal, however, to own or transport them through the California Free State.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	3	2	0	5	2	2	2	1	6	3	4	1

Movement: 5/10

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell, Taste), Influence (Calm), Wall Walking

Weaknesses: Fragile (2)

ANWUMA BAVOLE

Nycteris Avehomo

Habitat: Rainforests and coastal regions

Range: West Africa

Frequency: Common

Identification: The anwuma bavole is an Awakened large slit-faced bat. Its body is up to 60 centimeters long with a wingspan of 2 meters and a weight of up to 2 kilograms. It is covered in soft fuzzy fur. Colors range from charcoal grey to dark brown. The anwuma bavole also has a groove from the middle of its nose up to a pit in its forehead. It has oval-shaped ears above an oval-shaped face. Its 5-centimeter tail is connected to its wing membrane in a T-shaped tip.

Habits: The anwuma bavole lives in coastal West Africa, hunting fish in the Gulf of Guinea. It has a similar appearance to the birdman, though the anwuma bavole has less of a fox-like

face. Anwuma bavoles form groups of 20 or more to travel and hunt. Like all bats, they are nocturnal and can hunt insects by echolocation, though they mainly fish by watching the moonlight reflecting off their prey. Their broad wings allow them to hover and pluck fish out of the ocean. They defend themselves against predation by projecting a blast of high frequency sound to scare off predators.

They roost as a group in dense forest canopies. Anwuma have one offspring a year during the rainy season. The female leaves offspring behind to hunt but returns several times during the night to feed them. Anwuma bavole young mature in two years.

Anwuma bavole sometimes fixate upon groups of metahumans, following them for days without eating or sleeping. A dozen of them could follow a caravan for no apparent reason. When following such a group, they roost wherever shelter is available, such as rocky outcroppings or buildings. The Nzima people see this as an omen of good luck and actively encourage the creatures by feeding them. These bats are not known to carry any metahuman diseases.

For parabiologists, the anwuma bavole have been easy to study since they are just as curious, allowing close examination. Unfortunately, this curiosity has allowed them to be easily captured by poachers or pirates. Populations have been dwindling over the years, with little being done protect them.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	4	3	0	2	4	1	1	2	6	4	7	1

Movement: 12/25 (flight)

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon 3, Flight 3, Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Sonar), Gestalt Consciousness, Sonic Projection

Weaknesses: Fragile (1)

BONZO

Poicephalus canori

Habitat: Tropics

Range: West Africa

Frequency: Common

Identification: These miniature parrots are an Awakened variant of the Senegal parrot (*Poicephalus senegalus*). They grow to a length of about 21 centimeters with a mature wingspan of just over 14 centimeters. They typically weigh just over 100 grams. Their back, neck, and the upper part of their wings are a brilliant green. Their breast, lower wings, and tail feather can vary from yellow to red, depending upon the specimen. These parrots always possess a startlingly white head and a contrasting black beak. Compared to most parrots, a bonzo has an exceptionally large head and beak for its size.

Habits: In the wild, these diurnal, herbivorous birds are migratory throughout much of western Africa. Bonzo migration patterns follow a schedule based upon the maturation of a variety of different fruits, nuts, and seeds. These patterns lead to the birds traveling in excess of a thousand miles annually.

Bonzos have become extremely popular as pets since the Awakening. Their mimicry and songs are substantially more complex and accurate than those of any known mundane parrots. It's theorized that their vocalizations may be a selective advantage used in avoiding predators; however, there is little observational record to indicate that this is true in the wild.



Though bonzos are migratory, they quickly lose any incentive to migrate in the presence of a consistent food source. In many cases, this has led to populations being a nuisance to farmers attempting to harvest and keep a supply of grain. However, as a trade in these birds developed, many farmers took to capturing and selling the birds rather than attempting to chase them off.

In spite of extensive efforts, bonzos have not been successfully bred in captivity. All attempts at breeding have yielded only mundane parrots. It's theorized that there may be an Awakened plant involved in triggering the bird's metagenetic expression, but no such plant has yet been identified. Until this happens, it's likely that the birds will continue to hold a high price on the black market.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
0	2	1	1	4	2	3	1	1	6	4	3	1

Movement: 10/25 (flight)

Skills: Flight 2, Perception 2

Powers: Influence (Calm), Mimicry

GOMATIA

Chamaeleo jacksonii gomatus

Habitat: Rainforests

Range: Africa, Madagascar, and India

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The gomatia is a reptile about the size of a large dog (1 meter long, 80 centimeters high at the shoulder, and weighing 20–25 kilograms). It has independently rotating eyes, a prehensile tail and toes, and a long, sticky tongue. The toes on each foot are fused into groups of two and three, which the critter uses like a pair of tongs. Its scales are typically bright green, but they can vary depending upon the reptile's mood, health, and temperature. Gomatia have five horns on their faces; one on its nose, two facing forward on the upper front of the orbital crest, and two smaller ones facing upwards near the back of the orbital crest. It has a saw-toothed ridge along its back.

Habits: The gomatia is an Awakened species of chameleon. They are diurnal carnivores, typically eating small birds and insects such as the alufye. They will eat anything up to the size of a housecat, though they have been known to attack things many times that size. Its tongue can stretch out to three times the gomatia's body length and strike an object at its full range in less than thirty-thousandths of a second. The gomatia then pulls it back, crushing its prey in its jaws. They have great camouflage and can sneak up close to prey.

They breed once a year and have eight to ten live young after six months of gestation. Males use the horns as a show of dominance and as levers to throw competing males out of trees. Gomatia pose little danger to metahumans, and they are bought and sold as pets in the black market. Some gomatia have been used for security because they willingly engage animals larger than themselves, though they are nearly deaf and challenging to train. Variants can be found all over Africa with different head and facial ornamentations.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
6	3	1	6	1	6	2	3	2	6	3	7	1

Movement: 3/10

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 4, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Binding, Enhanced Senses (Touch, 360-Degree Vision), Immunity (Toxins), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Reduced Senses (Hearing, Smell)

KIWIG

Sus ursadae

Habitat: Remote forests and jungles

Range: Philippine Islands

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The kiwig is believed to be an Awakened version of the warty pig, which is native to the Philippines, though it is much larger and uglier than its progenitor. It averages 250 centimeters in length and 1 meter at the shoulder, and it weighs 200 kilograms. It is covered in wiry, coarse grey hair that sticks out in tufts. The kiwig has a bushy tail, short pointy ears with tufts of hair, and calcified warts on its face which are assumed to protect it during combat. The kiwig is a carnivore with a bear-like muzzle, although it does possess 30 centimeter-long curved tusks similar to those of a piasma.

Habits: The kiwig can be found on several islands in the Philippines, from Luzon to Mindanao, though it appears to have been hunted for food into extinction on some of the smaller islands. It is diurnal, but it will hunt both day and night with short sleeping periods throughout the day when necessary.

Kiwigs live in groups of four to six adults with a dominant male. A kiwig group's territory is roughly two square kilometers marked by scarring on trees. They create nests under fallen trees, though oddly they prefer to uproot non-native trees for their nests. Parabiologists theorize that it's the smell of the wood or sap that attracts them (teak, mahogany, etc). Some environmentalists humanize this behavior by suggesting that the kiwig is trying to save its native forest.

Kiwig sows can have two or three offspring annually. While the kiwig is a new species of warty pig, it cannot mate with its progenitor, and there are no mixed groups of kiwigs and mundane pigs. Kiwigs feed on native cattle, fish, and other small- to medium-sized animals, though they do not hunt wild pigs. Kiwig boars hunt alone and rarely target prey larger than themselves. Kiwig sows, however, hunt in groups and do coordinate attacks on larger prey. Boars sometimes follow kiwig sows and share in their captures.

There have been accounts of kiwig attacks on metahumans, especially where logging and deforestation is actively pursued. However, there are no recent confirmed reports of man-eating kiwigs. Due to their low population, it is already an endangered species. Kiwig have disappeared from some of the smaller islands between Luzon and Mindanao, and there has been a three-way conflict between kiwigs, Huk ecoterrorists, and the farmers and loggers on Mindanao. The Kiwig is a nuisance to the Philippine farming community, as it is prone to attack and drag off livestock or tear up agricultural farms.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
6	5	4	8	1	4	2	4	2	6	8	1

Movement: 12/45

Skills: Perception 2, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision, Smell), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 5P, AP 0)

SPIDER-BEAST

Nephila giganteus

Habitat: Tropical to temperate environments, always near fruiting trees
Range: Native to Amazonia, but spread throughout southwestern North America

Frequency: Common

Identification: An adult spider-beast grows up to 50 centimeters in body length. Each of its eight legs is also roughly 50 centimeters in length, and the legs terminate in curved claws used for climbing. These creatures have a mottled brown and black color that blends in well with the bark color of many Amazonian trees. Their carapace is hard and covered in spines. Two pairs of venomous mandibles are present below the animal's eight eyes.

Habits: The spider-beast spins massive webs in the upper branches of fruit trees. In the Amazon, these are primarily Awakened kiwi trees. However, in North America these include various citrus and apple trees. It preys upon insects, small birds, lizards, and rodents that become ensnared in its webs.

The spider-beast is aggressive only when extremely hungry, such as when prey animals are rare or shortly after emerging from its host. At either of these times, the animal will attack any moving creature it can find up to 200 kilograms in weight. Though normally solitary, a swarm of spider-beasts will work together after emerging from their hosts to overwhelm a single victim with their toxin and mandibles.

After mating, females inject their eggs into unripe fruit. As the eggs mature into larva, they consume the fruit and then move into a warm-blooded host animal to complete their development (see below).

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	3	4	2	1	3	1	3	1	6	7	1

Movement: 2/25

Skills: Climbing 3, Infiltration 5, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Armor (1/3), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0), Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: 1 Combat Turn, Power: 6, Effect: Disorientation), Wall Walking

TEMU

Chlorocebus custos

Habitat: Jungles

Range: Eastern and southern Africa

Frequency: Common

Identification: Temu are an Awakened variant of the vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*). Physiologically, temu cannot be differentiated from their mundane relatives. Like their parental species, they stand up to 80 centimeters in height and weigh up to 7 kilograms. Their ventral fur is pale grey to white, while their dorsal fur is a much darker grey. Their face and hands are a very dark grey, and their prehensile tails can be up to a meter in length.
Habits: These Awakened monkeys are omnivores, though the majority of their nutrition is derived from the many fruiting trees of their native territory. Temu typically supplement their fruit diet with flowers, seeds, grass, and the occasional rodent or insect. They are most active during the day, though temu communities often have members active during the night as well.

The key difference between a temu and the mundane vervet monkey is that temu can sense the presence of magic. Though

SPIDER-BEAST LARVAE

Vector: Burrowing

Speed: 4 Hours (6)

Penetration: 0

Power: 5

Nature: Parasitic

Effect: Hallucinations (See Below), Physical Damage

Spider-beast larvae mature from eggs planted in soft fruits then migrate into nearby warm-blooded hosts. The larvae are slow-moving, so any cognizant being will notice them and be able to easily squash their soft bodies. For this reason, the larvae typically target sleeping hosts. Once implanted, the larvae emit a powerful hallucinogen into the host's bloodstream. Hosts are at a +2 threshold to all actions while under its effect due to distractions. After 24 hours, a number of mature spider-beasts equal to the unresisted power rip themselves free from the host's body, inflicting 4P damage each. A hospital stay or a Cure Disease spell will eliminate the larvae.

they are not dual-natured, they are very clearly aware of activity on the astral plane. Spells, wards, and even passing spirits cause these animals to shout out a raucous warning. It's unclear what triggers this response or what predators might have led to this unusual defense mechanism.

This ability has made temu popular in the security industry. Many specimens have been sold to security companies for warnings of nearby astral activity. Mundane poachers are unable to distinguish between a temu and a mundane vervet monkey. As a consequence, poachers need to either have a way of viewing astral activity or pay a sensitive to check all captured specimens prior to sale.

Temu freely live among and interbreed with mundane vervets. Both strains live together in communities of up to fifty members. These animals have a clear mischievous streak. They seem to revel in the act of triggering security alarms for the sole purpose of watching the rapid guard response.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	4	3	3	2	4	3	2	2	6	4	7	1

Movement: 15/30

Skills: Climbing 4, Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell), Magic Sense, Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)

SAVANNAH

These environments of rolling grasslands are scattered with shrubs and isolated trees. Though similar to grasslands, they are universally in much warmer climates and typically located between a tropical rainforest and a desert.

ASONWU

Chlorocebus Voltae

Habitat: Dry woodlands, rainforests, and coastal regions

Range: Western Africa, near the Senegal and Volta Rivers

Frequency: Common

Identification: This bipedal creature stands roughly 80 centimeters tall and weighs an average of 7 kilograms. It has gold-green fur with pale hands and feet. Its face is covered in almost black fur with white fur in a stripe pattern on its forehead and cheeks. Its primate face has dark-colored, pointy ears with white tufts. The asonwu has pronounced canine teeth that slightly protrude from its mouth. The asonwu's fingers and toes end with sharp claws. It alternates its movement pattern between a bipedal or quadriplegia stance, depending upon movement rate.

Habits: Asonwu are carnivorous, feeding upon whatever prey they catch. Unlike the agropelter, asonwu live in social packs of up to 50 adult members, and they will coordinate attacks to take down large prey. A few members will hamstring their prey with quick bites; once the prey can't run, the pack will descend on it with other members attacking the throat and eyes. They have been noted to take on creatures as large as elephants and pigmy hippos. Asonwu are not sapient, but they do show the ability to use simple tools to break bones for marrow or use branches and stones as weapons.

Asonwu have a very structured hierarchy, including the killing of offspring from the lower ranks during breeding season. Asonwu breed during the rainy season, and they have one offspring a year.

They are known to carry an endemic disease which can cause itching, shaking, and eventually madness and brain death if not treated. In Asamando, it is rumored that the queen feeds tribes of asonwu along the Volta River as a deterrent for those trying to enter illegally. Asonwu are considered to be ill spirits that can bring sickness and bad luck to a village. Many local tribes create idols of asonwu to appease and ward off asonwu from their villages. Studies of such rituals do show success, but the reason for this is unknown. It may be that the carvings are intimidating.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	4	3	3	2	4	4	2	2	6	4	7	1

Movement: 15/30

Skills: Climbing 4, Clubs 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell), Gestalt Consciousness, Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 3P, AP 0), Pestilence (Speed: 6 hours, Power: 8, Effect: Disorientation, Shakes)

EKYELEBENLE

Dendroaspis batrachea

Habitat: Savannahs

Range: West and Central Africa

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The ekyelebenle is a bright green snake that can reach 6 meters in length and 150 kilograms in weight.

Habits: Ekyelebenles are a very aggressive version of the African green mamba snake (*Dendroaspis angusticeps*). They hunt anything dwarf-sized or smaller, and they can either spit their venom or deliver it through a bite. The venom of the ekyelebenle is five times as toxic as the black mamba's, and it contains batrachotoxin.

It is highly arboreal, only rarely leaving the trees except to grab prey or bask in the sun. It eats creatures such as the gomatia, anwuma bavoie, and asonwu who travel and climb through the jungle as well as mundane primates and birds. Once it has killed its prey, an ekyelebenle will pull it high into the treetops before feeding.

EKYELEBENLE VENOM

Vector: Contact

Speed: 1 Combat Turn

Penetration: 0

Power: 8

Effect: Physical Damage, Blindness (see below)

This potent venom is spit at victims of the ekyelebenle. If the Power of the toxin after the Toxin Resistance Test exceeds the target's Body, the target will be blinded and unable to see for 1 hour. If the target glitches on the resistance test, this blinding is permanent.

Ekyelebenles lay six to ten eggs in the hollow of a tree among decaying vegetation. The hatchlings, though only 60 centimeters long at birth, are just as poisonous as their parents. The ekyelebenle doesn't care for its young before or after birth, as it has no natural predators.

While nova scorpion venom is deadly, there have been expeditions to hunt young ekyelebenle for their venom. It's too difficult to train or farm such an aggressive species. It's a tough challenge to hunt an adult ekyelebenle, even with magical support. Special headgear is recommended when travelling through ekyelebenle territory, since startling one could result in a spray of venom.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	6	2	6	1	5	1	4	2	6	3	7	1

Movement: 10/20

Skills: Climbing 5, Counterspelling 4, Exotic Ranged Weapon 4, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell, Thermographic Vision), Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins), Magical Guard (Self), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0), Venom (see below)

QUICKSILVER MONGOOSE

Herpestes illustris

Habitat: Forests, savannahs, or scrub; never far from water

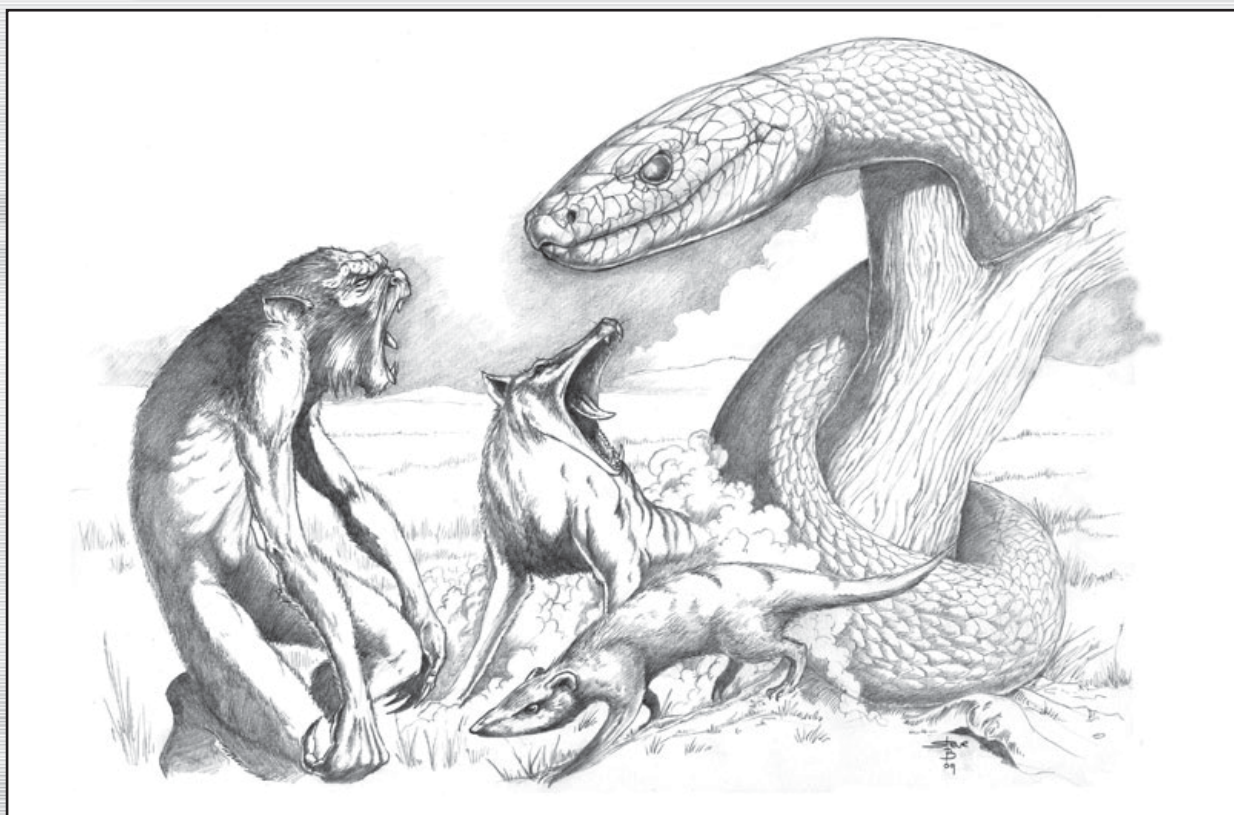
Range: Sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt, Spain, and Portugal

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The quicksilver mongoose has a slender, approximately 1 meter-long body and 80 centimeter-long tail with a pointy snout and small ears. It averages 3 to 4 kilograms in weight. It has grey-brown fur with a black tip on its tail. Their hind feet are furless and leathery. It has highly developed carnassials used for shearing meat.

Habits: This Awakened mongoose is a carnivorous, diurnal creature subsiding upon small animals, birds (and their eggs), and snakes. A main dietary requirement of the quicksilver mongoose is snake venom, so it specifically hunts venomous snakes. When it encounters a snake, it performs a hypnotic dance in which it moves around while stomping and thumping its tail in rhythm. The snake is unable to move once it is hypnotized, and the quicksilver mongoose pounces on it. This dancing ability works not only on snakes but on anyone observing the dance.

The quicksilver mongoose lives in small groups of up to seven adults, usually a male and several females. Mating occurs in July, and the female births two to four young. Male offspring usually leave to form their own groups; females stay longer and may join



INCOMING FEED.....

the groups. Quiksilver mongooses are difficult to catch, as bad luck is reported by poachers.

In the Middle East, gladiatorial combat between quiksilver mongooses and a variety of Awakened snakes is a common form of entertainment. Opponents include the aitvaras and ekyelebenle, and gambling on the matches is common.

The quiksilver mongoose is very intelligent, and it can be trained to perform tricks. They are often kept as pets to keep down vermin. They can live up to 20 years in captivity. Because they will eat any small animals and birds, it's illegal to import the quiksilver mongoose into the CAS, UCAS, California Free State, and NAN Territories.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	7	4	1	3	5	2	3	2	6	5	9	1

Movement: 20/35

Skills: Gymnastics 5, Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Shadowing 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Accident, Confusion, Desire Reflection, Immunity (Toxins), Movement (Self), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Snake Venom)

TASMANIAN TIGER

Thylacinus cynocephalus

Habitat: Forests, scrublands, and grasslands

Range: Australia and Tasmania

Frequency: Rare

Identification: A Tasmanian tiger, or thylacine, is vaguely canine in appearance. It has a greyhound-like snout, though its ears are rounded like a great cat. As an act of intimidation, a thylacine can

unhinge its lower jaw and flip back its head, opening its mouth over 170 degrees wide. Its yellow-to-brown fur contrasts sharply with the black stripes that begin about halfway down its back and extend along its kangaroo-like balance tail. The marsupial's hind legs are much stronger than its forelegs, and it walks with more of the hind foot flat on the ground than a cat or dog. Over short distances, a Tasmanian tiger can move using the same hopping means of locomotion as a kangaroo. A mature adult stands about 60 centimeters at the shoulder and weighs about 20 kilograms.

Habits: The Tasmanian tiger is an oddity of convergent evolution that exists only by a quirk of science. After preying upon farm animals, especially sheep, this species of marsupials was hunted to extinction in 1936. Though unrelated to either dogs or cats, the animal clearly has a similarity to both of these predatory species. In 2006, several specimens were successfully cloned from old remains. These were soon put on display in a number of Australian zoos, and breeding patterns were established. A few months after the Awakening, in early 2012, every single thylacine vanished from the zoos and research labs on the same night.

It was over a year before several sightings occurred in the wild and a bit longer before paranaturalists were able to decipher the mystery. Every member of the species was simultaneously infused with the magical ability to assume a mist form, which they promptly used to escape captivity. It's unclear how this oddity of the paranatural world survived the cloning process.

Tasmanian tigers are obligate carnivores, solitary hunters, and pursuit predators. They preferentially hunt in the late day and early evening. They are not particularly selective in their prey; however, they are selective about the portions of the prey that they

consume, showing a distinct preference for the liver and kidneys while leaving other organs and muscle groups behind.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	4	4	5	1	4	2	4	1	6	4	8	2

Movement: 10/60

Skills: Gymnastics 2 (Jumping +2), Infiltration 4, Perception 3, Shadowing 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Accident, Concealment (Self), Mist Form

SUBTERRANEAN

This environment is best characterized by what it lacks rather than what it has. Some animals are adapted to living deep under the ground in the absence of sunlight and photosynthetic food sources. The climate is consistent, and food comes from smaller animals or a vast array of fungi.

DOUR

Pan malifici

Habitat: Forests, mountains, and caves

Range: Tropical and subtropical areas of North and Central America

Frequency: Common

Identification: The dour is a short, stocky humanoid that is heavily muscled and dark-skinned. It stands 125 centimeters tall and weighs 70 kilograms. The dour has limited hair growth on its head, shoulders, and chest. It has long arms and a somewhat human-like facial structure, though its eyes seem disproportionately large.

Habits: Dours are an Awakened form of the chimpanzee (*Pan troglodyte*). It is omnivorous, though it prefers meat. Dours shy away from daylight and hunt rats and other rodents in caverns or abandoned mines. Dours live and hunt in small family groups of roughly five members, but they are often part of a larger community of usually twenty-five to fifty members in the same cavern system.

They live in lairs of rock and wood dragged into the caverns from outside. Dours are intelligent enough to use simple tools and weapons and to make traps such as pits and deadfalls. They are aggressive in protecting their territory. They will set up ambushes if they detect intruders.

Dour females can have one offspring a year. The young dours stay with their parents for up to eight years before reaching maturity. Both parents care for their children, and the children typically stay with the family to hunt.

Though there has not been any evidence of complex language usage, dours are sapient. They primarily communicate through grunts, whistles, and howls. Some dours are reported to be able to use magic, but these reports remain unconfirmed.

Dours have no sense of hygiene, and their waste products are often very close to their lairs. This makes many dour lairs noticeable by smell.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
5	4	3	5	3	4	2	3	2	6	4	7	1

Movement: 10/20

Skills: Climbing 3, Close Combat Group 4, Perception 3, Intimidation 3, Outdoors Group 3, Shadowing 2, Throwing Weapons 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Uneducated

AetherpediaQuery: Dour Subspecies

The arboreal dours are nocturnal, and they spend the day in lairs that they dig under the roots of large trees. They know how to create ropes, and they are known to create nets, snares, and bridges. Arboreal dours are distinguishable by a darker skin than the subterranean dwelling dour, and they are slightly taller.

City dours are diurnal, and they have adapted to living in abandoned zones of feral cities. These dours have adopted the use of metahuman materials, including clothes and jewelry. The city dours also have changed hunting habits from a nuclear family group to either hunting solo or with up to a dozen individuals of limited family relations. Their diet remains primarily rodents. City dours are more compulsive in destruction and anarchy.

ROCKWORM

Lumbricus saxi

Habitat: Mountains, hills, and urban areas

Range: Northern half of North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: These 2-meter-long giant earthworms appear to be an Awakened variant of a common nightcrawler (*Lubricus terrestris*). They share the same segmentation as these ground worms along with the "collar" located about a third of the body length down from the head. Unlike mundane worms, the rockworm's body is encrusted with silica deposits, giving it a near-complete exoskeleton. The rockworm's "head" terminates in a tripartite mouth. When opened, the teeth resemble the grinding surfaces of a drill-bit used for well drilling.

Habits: Rockworms burrow through the earth at depths of up to 50 meters. Using their drill-like mouth structure and powerful jaws, they can grind solid bedrock into dust. The ground-up rock is mixed with their acidic saliva and digested before the indigestible portions are defecated. The rockworm's nutritional requirements are unique and a bit of a mystery. The animal has a clear need for a diet that is high in silicon, but other physiological processes also exploit a variety of unusual minerals.

These animals are hermaphroditic but incapable of self-fertilization. In the course of their tunneling, they often form larger caverns, over 25 meters in height in some instances, which serve as dens and breeding grounds. As worms continue to enter and exit these caverns, the bedrock surrounding them can become increasingly unstable. In a number of cases, this instability has led to a sudden sink-hole forming with severe consequences for surface structures.

In order to bring air into their tunnels, rockworms regularly dig holes to the surface. In some instances, these air vents can enter the foundation and walls of buildings or bridges. This can lead to architectural instability, and some municipalities have placed bounties on rockworms.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	4	3	2	1	2	1	3	1	6	3	5	1

Movement: 2/10

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon 4, Unarmed Combat 3



INCOMING FEED.....

Powers: Armor (2/2), Corrosive Spit, Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP -1), Regeneration
Note: The sandworm, which is found in the Mojave Desert and several African deserts, is a much larger variant of the rockworm. Sandworms are predatory animals that have made confirmed attacks on metahumans.

TROGLODYTE

Pan speluncae

Habitat: Caves, canyons, and abandoned mines

Range: Rocky Mountains in North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: These hairless primates stand about 160 centimeters in height and weigh about 45 kilograms. Eyes that are over 8 centimeters in diameter dominate their faces. Their ears are pointed, and they jut horizontally from the head. Troglodytes walk upright on their skinny but wiry legs. Specimens have never been observed to wear clothing, and they have no externally visible sex organs. Members of the race communicate with one another using a language filled with a mixture of sibilant sounds and contrasting glottal stops.

Habits: Troglodytes are omnivores that are well-adapted for life underground. Their enormous eyes are capable of seeing by the faint visible light of fluorescing subterranean fungus, though their vision also stretches into the infrared range. Their digestive systems are capable of processing fungus and lichens far more capably than any other primate, though they supplement this diet with a variety of cave animals.

Troglodytes live in familial clans of up to fifty members. Their hierarchy is most likely based upon a member's age, though contention remains between anthropologists who have studied troglodyte tribes. These tribes maintain a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. There have not been any observations of troglodyte attempts at agriculture. On rare occasions, some tribes send groups to the surface to forage near cave entrances at night. These groups are extremely cautious about encounters with the surface world, and they clearly take care to not be followed back to their residence.

Troglodytes are tool users, though their tools do not show a high level of sophistication. Most of these are basic digging implements, levers, or simple weapons. However, they do show sophistication in transporting water from deep springs and rivers to their tribal encampments using primitive plumbing.

Linguasofts for the troglodyte language first appeared in late 2071. These remain extremely controversial, and it remains unclear whether all troglodytes share a common language. It is clear that not all tribes respond well to metahumans using the linguasoft, but there does not seem to be a strict regional association with that response.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	3	4	2	2	3	2	3	1	6	2	7	1

Movement: 10/20

Skills: Climbing 4, Infiltration 4, Throwing Weapons 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Concealment, Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Sapience

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Uneducated

WILD MINOTAUR

Aurochs atrox

Habitat: Underground caverns and abandoned excavations

Range: Southern Europe and around the Mediterranean

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The wild minotaur resembles a large ox with a primate face. Specimens are about 360 centimeters from snout to tail, 2 meters tall at the shoulder, and around 850 kilograms in weight. The wild minotaur ranges in color from brown to black with a pale stripe down its spine. It also has a pair of lyre-shaped horns set at a forward angle above its face. It has a protruding jaw with prominent tusks and flaring nostrils. Its fur is shaggy around the nape of the neck and shoulders, tapering into a mane over its sternum.

Habits: Genetic tests from auroch bones indicate that the wild minotaur is an Awakened species of auroch (*Bos taurus*), though it has been extinct since 1627. The wild minotaur, not to be confused with the troll metavariant, is a nocturnal carnivore that attacks and eats goats, sheep, and other similarly sized mammals. It also likes to eat human flesh (but no other metatypes).

It uses its confusion ability to hunt so that the victim doesn't know what is happening until it is too late. It will gore and bite the victim, either bloodying its prey or crushing the victim's skull or windpipe. Wild minotaurs live in large subterranean places like mines, natural caves, and even abandoned bunkers. They move quickly and quietly at night when hunting. While they have not been seen in cities, it is rumored that there could be several wild minotaurs living in the catacombs of older cities in France and Italy.

Those that try to hunt a wild minotaur find a formidable adversary, as it uses terrain and its confusion ability to deceive prey, especially in its native labyrinths of tunnels. Typically, the hunter becomes the hunted.

The most puzzling mystery of wild minotaurs is the lack of females. Parabiologists have found and dissected only male wild minotaurs. Since the wild minotaur is very dangerous, there are standing bounties in most nations for the documentation and capture of a female wild minotaur—dead or alive.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
12	3	5	10	3	4	1	4	2	6	4	9	1

Movement: 20/50

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 3, Shadowing 2, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Concealment (Self), Confusion, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Immunity (Illusions), Natural Weapon (Bite/Horns: DV 6P, AP 0)

TAIGA

Also called the boreal forest, the taiga is characterized by average temperatures that are below freezing for six months out of the year. Most of the trees that can survive in this environment are coniferous such as pine, spruce, and fir.

CERBERUS HOUND

Canis cerberi

Habitat: From cold wet mountainous terrain to the boreal forests

Range: Greece and the surrounding Balkan states

Frequency: Extremely Rare

Identification: The cerberus hound is an extremely rare Awakened dog that has a unique three-headed physique. It stands 120 centimeters tall and weighs 110 kilograms. It has short black-to-grey fur with a thick, curly black mane and a long narrow tail. It has perked, wolf-like ears and sharp claws.

Habits: Cerberus hounds are solitary creatures and carnivorous by nature. They hunt deer, goats, and sheep along with the occasional metahuman. They rely on their acute senses to track prey and sheer strength to pursue their prey for long distances without tiring. Once on the trail of game, they relentlessly chase their prey both day and night. They will attack with all three heads, though this provides little advantage since the heads are so close together. They have the advantage of stamina, and they will disregard stealth, pursuing their prey until collapsing from exhaustion.

The cerberus hound has not been well-studied due to its reclusive nature and rarity. Parabiologists studying the cerberus hound have been able to track one for only a week before losing it in the woods. Anecdotal reports indicate that a cerberus hound will continue to fight even after losing one head. While observing the cerberus hound, no other hounds were seen, though it was noted that there was an increase of spirit activity in the vicinity as well as the sound of multiple animals howling. It remains uncertain if the howling was another specimen with multiple throats or additional hounds. Females and pups have not been recorded, though smaller juveniles with darker fur are believed to have been seen in the summer. Corporations continue to send expeditions to the Balkans in order to better study the cerberus hound and any possible security applications for the animal.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
6	4	5	6	3	6	2	4	2	6	5	11	3

Movement: 15/50

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon 2, Infiltration 3, Intimidation 3, Perception 6, Running 4, Shadowing 4, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Concealment (Self), Corrosive Spit, Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell, Thermographic Vision), Immunity (Cold, Fire), Movement (Self), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0)

GLOAMING OWL

Bubo crepusculi

Habitat: Forested areas, low hills, and grasslands

Range: Northern regions of North America

Frequency: Common

Identification: This large predatory bird strongly resembles its mundane relative, the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*). Like the mundane variant, two tall tufts of feathers extend from its temples to characterize the gloaming owl. It's best differentiated by its solid black plumage and larger size—up to 80 centimeters in length with a 2-meter wingspan and a weight of over 4 kilograms. Both its black beak and its talons are sharply curved to tear prey.

Habits: Gloaming owls are nocturnal carnivores that prey upon mice, snakes, chipmunks, and similarly sized animals. In addition, these birds can capture bats while in flight. Through their magical talents, these raptors are able to project a field of silence around themselves. This effectively makes the birds invisible to a bat's echolocation, enabling them to surprise their prey.

As gloaming owls catch prey animals while in flight and carry them to a tree for feeding, the birds rarely target animals more than 30 centimeters in length. However, these owls also have two effective defense mechanisms. Substantial anecdotal evidence has confirmed that gloaming owls can cause blindness at will. This is assumed to be a paranatural talent, as there does not seem to be a physiological basis for the ability. Similarly, gloaming birds instill an inexplicable sense of dread among all who view them.

Though their breeding season is typically in January or February, gloaming owls begin seeking mates in the mid-fall. As these owls are dependent upon silence, mates are attracted by an extensive series of aerial acrobatics rather than more traditional mating calls. After mating, clutches are typically two eggs in size. Young gloaming owls hatch about a month later and take their first flights six weeks later. They generally stay in the company of at least one parent until the following fall.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 4 3 2 2 4 2 2 1 6 5 7 1

Movement: 10/35 (flight)

Skills: Flight 4, Infiltration 3, Perception 5, Spellcasting 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Fear, Innate Spell (Vision Removal), Silence

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

GRANDFATHER ELK

Alces alces vetustus

Habitat: Boreal and mixed deciduous forests in temperate-to-subarctic climates

Range: Western North America and Mongolia

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: Only the alpha male grandfather elk has features that distinguish it from its mundane progenitors. These specimens grow enormous horns that are over 2 meters wide with a dozen or more points and weighing 25 kilograms, and they have long white fur from the sides of the muzzle and chin down to the neck. These males also have increased muscle mass. The average size for an alpha grandfather elk is 2 meters tall at the shoulder, 240 centimeters from nose to tail, and 330 kilograms in weight.

Habits: The grandfather elk of Europe, also known as the elder moose in North America, is a subspecies of elk (*Alces alces*). They typically resemble mundane elks; however, grandfather elk males have a characteristic X-linked modification. These genes express only if the male becomes the leader of the herd. As described earlier, the grandfather elk alpha male resembles a stereotypical metahuman grandfather with a moustache and beard.

The grandfather elk has some unique abilities as well. The lifespan of one tagged grandfather elk alpha has continued since the species was first identified in 2033. It has now lived twice the length of the average elk, and it is still going strong. They are more resistant to magic, and they can protect a herd from magical attacks. Grandfather elk alphas are leaders for life. They are not challenged by younger bulls, and they stop leading only if they die. If this happens, another male undergoes the transformation, which takes about two days to complete. The herd follows the new grandfather elk as its natural leader.

Grandfather elks are herbivores, eating grass and other plants. They also migrate to lower elevations in the winter for food. Shed

AETHERPEDIA QUERY: Grandfather Elk Variants

The American elk (*Cervus elaphus*) is another species that carries the X-chromosome modification. This can lead to some nomenclature confusion, as North America has elk and moose while in Europe these same animals are called wapiti and elk. So the Awakened North American elk goes by both grandfather and elder elk. The alpha male grows branch-like antlers of a similar size and color. The elder elk also grows long white fur from the sides of its muzzle and from its chin, giving it the distinctive moustache and beard.

grandfather elk antlers are prized for alchemical purposes as well as for other crafts.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
11 4 4 9 3 6 3 6 3 6 4 10 1

Movement: 45/65

Skills: Counterspelling 6, Perception 4, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Animal Control (Elk), Fear, Mind Link, Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Immunity (Age), Magical Guard, Natural Weapon (Horns: DV 5P, AP 0)

Note: +1 Reach

HORNED BEAR

Ursus Americanus Cornuda

Habitat: Forested and mountainous regions

Range: Northern and western North America, Norway

Frequency: Rare

Identification: Horned bears stand almost 4 meters and can weigh 600 kilograms. These massive ursines have a pair of ram-like horns on either side of their heads, and their fur is dark brown or black. **Habits:** The horned bear is a very resilient species. It has an exceptionally thick hide with a layer of tough dermal deposits. It is also incredibly strong and very dangerous when angered. The horned bear is omnivorous, eating carrion, berries, nuts, insects, and even alligator eggs. They rarely feed at landfills but do raid croplands and bee hives.

The horned bear is a semi-intelligent and territorial species. When an intruder enters its territory, it follows a specific behavior. Initially, the bear challenges the intruder. If the intruder accepts the challenge, the bear engages it in hand to paw combat. The bear actually sheaths its claws and attempts to only knock the intruder out. If the intruder draws first blood, the horned bear allows the intruder through its territory. If the intruder is knocked unconscious, then the horned bear expects the intruder to leave after regaining consciousness. If the intruder does not try to enter melee or if it receives help, the bear instead becomes much more violent and fights to the death. Both males and females of this species practice this behavior except when the female has offspring nearby. In that instance, females exhibit a fight-or-flight response to protect their cubs.

When food is plentiful, the horned bear is more sociable and will feed peacefully alongside other species of bears.



Female horned bears can have offspring every two years and can give birth to up to two cubs in late winter. These cubs stay with their mother for over a year before being weaned. Cubs look like normal bears until their eighth to tenth month, when they start to grow horns. The mother horned bear will stay with her cubs, teaching them to forage for themselves.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
13 6 4 13 1 4 4 5 2 6 5 8 2

Movement: 25/45

Skills: Astral Combat 4, Climbing 2, Intimidation 4, Perception 3, Running 2, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Armor (4/6), Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 7P, AP 0)

Note: +2 Reach

HUMPED HORSE

Equus dromedaries

Habitat: Subarctic and arctic tundra and forests

Range: Northern Asia, especially Siberia and Mongolia

Frequency: Common

Identification: The humped horse is a powerfully built horse with the twin humps of a Bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus*). An adult humped horse stands nearly 2 meters at the shoulder and weighs over 900 kilograms. Their fur is denser than any mundane horse, and it varies in color from grey to dark brown, though its color may change based upon the surrounding terrain.

Habits: The humps on this animal's back provide an additional energy and water reserve, allowing greater stamina, range, and climate resistance. These three characteristics have made these animals prized mounts for anyone forced to travel through the cold of Siberia and Mongolia, particularly traditionalist tribes. In addition, the humped horse is a powerful pack animal that is capable of carrying loads of 300 kilograms for an extended journey. However, the humped horse is never truly domesticated. These animals remain wild and too independent-minded for any but the most talented and patient of instructors.

Humped horses roam their territory in packs of up to fifty specimens. These diurnal herbivores spend most of their time grazing grasslands and avoiding predators. Herds typically run from predators, though stallions will fight to defend the herd's young. In combat, they rear up to attack with their hooves and spit huge wads of sticky mucus to slow their opponents. They lack a killing drive, and they will resume flight once a foe is incapacitated.

In the wild, these animals mate in the spring, when there is extensive competition between stallions for mares. Colts are born the following spring, and they stay with a herd for two to three years. In spite of extensive efforts, there have been no successful attempts to breed captive humped horses or clone the species. The reason for this remains unclear, but it may be tied to astral influences.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
7 5 5 5 3 4 1 4 2 6 3 9 2

Movement: 20/100

Skills: Infiltration 1, Perception 3, Running 5, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Animal Control (Equines), Binding, Guard, Movement (Self)

Note: The humped horse may add its Magic attribute to tests that resist training attempts.

MIST LYNX

Lynx caligae

Habitat: Temperate to subarctic forested regions.

Range: Northern half of North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The mist lynx is an Awakened wild cat descended from the mundane Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*). This variant is about fifty percent larger than the parental species, up to 140 centimeters in length and as much as 35 kilograms in weight. These cats have exceptionally long limbs and can stand up to a meter at the shoulder in a hunched-back posture. Their fur is pale gray with white markings and distinctive tufts on the ears.

Habits: These wild cats are carnivorous predators that target small woodland animals as their primary prey, though larger animals are sometimes targeted. They live in family groups—typically two adults and one to five young—but hunting is a solitary activity. These animals are typically stealthy when approaching prey. In many cases, they will use their talent to turn into a mist, reforming directly over the victim.

When not hunting, mist lynxes often spend their time perched in trees 4 to 6 meters off the ground. From a perch, they silently observe the activities of the forest, sometimes tracking prey animals for later targeting. Most encounters with metahumans occur at these times, though there are substantiated reports of unprovoked attacks upon metahumans by mist lynxes. As the cats are not territorial, it's unclear what triggers these actions.

Mist lynxes mate in the early winter and give birth to litters of two to five kittens in the early spring. While the young mature during the winter and spring months, a family will occupy a den. These are often located in physically inaccessible locations that require the animals to enter in mist form. Examples include crevices in cliff faces, hollows behind a rock slide, or just a burrow with an extremely small opening. Young stay with their parents until the following spring.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
3 5 4 5 1 4 2 3 2 6 5 8 1

Movement: 10/50

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 4, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Mist Form, Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: 6P, AP -1)

MUNCHKIN

Simiidiabolus hibernicus

Habitat: Forested areas, preferably near running water

Range: Great Lakes region of North America, spreading westward to the Rocky Mountains

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The munchkin is a bipedal hominid that stands about 90 centimeters in height. Most of its body is covered in a dense red-brown pelt. Its jaw, which often hangs open, has extended canines and pointed teeth which are well-suited to rending flesh. All ten fingers and toes end in sharply hooked claws.

Habits: These arboreal carnivores depend upon a diet of small forest creatures, including squirrels, birds, rabbits, and even small deer. They spend their lives in trees, where they can move much more quickly by brachiation than they can on the ground. From their perches, they often silently approach their prey, rending it with their claws or teeth before it can sense their presence.

Genetic analyses performed on munchkin samples clearly indicate that they are closely related to Geoffroy's Spider Monkey (*Ateles geoffroyi*). However, there are far more extensive variations between the DNA of these two species than would normally be associated between an Awakened specimen and its mundane variant. Recent metagenetic theories suggest that these additional DNA sequences may be tied into a much larger astral genome shadow than has been observed in any other Awakened animal. However, urban legends continue to postulate that the munchkin species might be an accident of genetic engineering.

Munchkins live in small tribes of up to twelve members in their arboreal communities—often the entire community will live within the branches of a single large tree. Hunters leave the tree by day to find prey, which they bring back and share with the tribe. When larger predators or metahumans approach a tribal lair, munchkins become extremely defensive. Initially, they warn intruders with shrill cries and barks. Intruders that continue to approach are pelted with rocks, heavy logs, and sometimes sharpened sticks or bones.

There have been no successful studies of munchkin mating or breeding habits. It's assumed that their lifecycle is similar to that of other spider monkeys, but this has not been confirmed since the creatures do not survive in captivity.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
3	4	4	5	2	4	4	4	3	6	8	1

Movement: 4/25

Skills: Climbing 4, Infiltration 4, Perception 3, Shadowing 2, Throwing Weapons 3, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 4P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Molybdenum)

SNOW SNAKE

Ophidia niphophila

Habitat: Snow-covered ground of forested terrain in winter

Range: Northern half of North America

Frequency: Common

Identification: The snow snake is most easily distinguished by the thick pelt of blazingly white fur that covers its dorsal surface and sides. Scales on the underside are likewise snow white in coloration. Its small mouth hosts a pair of hinged, envenomed fangs. Its two small, bright-red eyes are its most visible feature when travelling through a field of snow. These snakes can grow to 250 centimeters in length and weigh over 20 kilograms.

Habits: These carnivores prey on small animals—anything that they can swallow whole. Because they are active in the winter months, their hunting methods are adapted to that season. Rather than hunting active game, the snow snake seeks out the burrows of hibernating prey. It then slithers in and devours its victims as they slumber. In order to maintain a heightened metabolism, the snow snake must feed much more often than mundane snakes. To assuage its hunger, the snow snake hunts around the clock.

Conversely, the snow snake hibernates during the warmer half of the year. It digs out a burrow, generally under the roots of a coniferous tree, where it spends the season in torpidity. At the end of the winter, the snake sheds its pelt, and a new one grows into place as it rests through the summer. If a snow snake's burrow is disturbed during the summer, it can be easily mistaken for an albino variant of a mundane snake.

Snow snakes are not territorial. They are also wary of creatures that are too large to consume. As a consequence, they will generally attempt to hide, often by simply remaining motionless, when in the presence of larger predators and metahumans. In spite of this cautious nature, snow snakes can be extremely dangerous. When threatened, they will not hesitate to exploit their venomous fangs when striking a threat. Their neurotoxin is quite potent and can be lethal to metahumans, particularly with repeated strikes.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	5	4	2	1	4	1	2	1	6	3	8	1

Movement: 3/10

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 3, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Smell), Immunity (Cold), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP +1), Venom

Weaknesses: Vulnerability (Fire)

WOOLY MAMMOTH

Mammuthus primigenius

Habitat: Arctic and subarctic tundra and taiga

Range: Trans-Polar Aleut and Awakened Siberia

Frequency: Common

Identification: The wooly mammoth is most closely related to the mundane Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*). It is distinguished from the elephant by a dense coat of fur—up to a meter in length during the winter—and ornately curved tusks which may grow up to 5 meters in length. A fully grown wooly mammoth stands about 5 meters at the shoulder and weighs roughly 7,000 kilograms. However, exceptionally large bull mammoths nearly twice this size have been observed.

Habits: Though some have been trained and employed for military use by the metasapients of Yakut, the wooly mammoth is not a domesticated animal. There are believed to be several thousand of these massive herbivores traveling in herds through Arctic and Subarctic terrain. During the winter, these creatures use their massive curved tusks to clear snow and ice from the ground, allowing them access to dormant plant life for grazing.

Wooly mammoths have few natural predators, as a herd of ten to twenty of these creatures is never an easy target. In addition to a thick pelt, the mammoth has a 30-centimeter layer of dense blubber under its skin that serves as insulation, defense, and an energy reserve. Though primarily used for digging, its massive tusks are powerful weapons when backed by its bulk. In spite of, or because of, these defenses, mammoth tusks are prized for artistic and magical uses.

A wooly mammoth's pelt is a small ecosystem unto itself, which is responsible for an overpowering, musky odor. Over two dozen different species of insect thrive within a pelt as parasites that prey upon some of the smaller insects present. In turn, two different species of arctic birds will often trail mammoth herds to prey upon these insects.

Mammoths mate in the late spring, when a single dominant bull attempts to defend all of the females in its herd from other males. Pregnancy lasts 24 months. A newborn calf weighs over 100 kilograms. Calves will stay with a herd until they reach sexual maturity, which takes about fifteen years.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
12	4	4	12	1	4	3	4	1	6	4	8	1

Movement: 10/40

Skills: Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 2
Powers: Armor (5/7), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Immunity (Cold, Illusions), Movement (Self), Natural Weapon (Tusks: DV 7P, AP 0), Regeneration

TEMPERATE FOREST

Temperate forests have four distinct seasons (spring, summer, autumn, and winter) and trees such as oak, beech, maple, and elm. They average temperatures of 10 degrees Celsius with an average rainfall of 30–60 inches.

AGROPELTER

Pithecocephalus hermes

Habitat: The densest portions of the temperate rain forest in the Pacific Northwest

Range: Northwestern North America, restricted to densely forested areas

Frequency: Rare

Identification: A thick coat of dark brown or black fur that is typically matted covers this 90 centimeter-tall biped. Its ape-like face is set off by a pair of large pointed ears. All of its fingers and toes terminate in sharp claws, and all four limbs seem disproportionately long. Though fully capable of walking on its legs or brachiation, an agropelter often reverts to a quadruped stance. The specimen alternates movement stance based upon mood and the speed necessary.

Habits: Agropelters live in family groups that typically have less than twelve members. These groupings are fiercely territorial within their own species and in competition with any other predator. Though the tribes are ill-suited to direct confrontations with larger predators, they are aggressively disruptive of any intruder's actions. They can destroy unprotected metahuman camps or simply pelt intruders with branches, rocks, and offal from the forest canopy. These actions exceed simple scavenging of food. Instead, they appear to derive an instinctive pleasure from acts of wanton destruction.

Agropelters are physiological omnivores but carnivores by preference. Most of their diet consists of small birds, insects, and tree-dwelling rodents. They supplement this with various seasonal fruits and nuts—the families do not stockpile food. Larger prey animals are beyond the hunting abilities of a single agropelter. However, there are anecdotal reports of agropelter groups working together to kill isolated and weakened larger animals.

Though intelligent and capable of using simple tools, agropelters are not sapient. Recordings of agropelter activities show no evidence of verbal or non-verbal language use. Their cunning, however, is beyond repute. These animals are clearly capable of coordinating hunts and setting simple traps.

Genetic evidence has shown that the agropelter is an Awakened version of the rhesus monkey. Their birth rates, mating patterns, and life expectancy are largely unchanged from the mundane species.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	3	4	2	1	4	4	2	2	6	8	1

Movement: 5/20

Skills: Climbing 4, Infiltration 3, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Throwing Weapons 3, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 2P, AP 0)

BASILISK

Varanis lapidis

Habitat: Temperate and tropical woodlands, always near running water

Range: Native to Indonesia, but now active globally

Frequency: Rare

Identification: When fully grown, the body and head of these lizards are about 1.5 meters in length with an additional 1-meter tail. They are only about 20 centimeters tall at the shoulder. Average body weight just exceeds 100 kilograms. Their heavily scaled hides are colored in a mottled pattern of yellow and black that fades into a striped pattern along the tail. A spiny dorsal fan extends about 30 centimeters in height along the length of the animal. The mouth is filled with saw-edged teeth, much like those of a shark, that are constantly replaced.

Habits: The basilisk is an Awakened variant of the komodo dragon and native only to a small portion of Indonesia. However, its territorial nature and ability to petrify a target has turned the species into one of the most popular Awakened guard animals. As such, tens of thousands of the animals have been bred in captivity since their discovery in 2013. Escaped animals have established thriving communities in jungles and forests all over the world.

These reptiles are naturally solitary carnivores. Their hunting mechanism is dependent upon their ability to petrify small prey and then shatter the statue with their powerful jaws. Once shattered, the dead prey returns to its fleshy state, and the basilisk consumes the remains. Basilisks are also drawn by the scent of blood, and they will scavenge kills from other predators.

These animals are powerful swimmers. They are capable of staying submerged for up to eight minutes at a time in pursuit of prey.

Basilisks are naturally diurnal; however, specimens used for guard purposes are trained to be active at night.

Wild basilisks mate in the spring and lay a clutch of up to twelve eggs that hatch twenty-one days later. However, most of the world's basilisk population are non-fertile specimens bred in corporate labs for guard purposes. The frequency of basilisk colonies in non-native locations led to the Corporate Court banning the practice of breeding fertile basilisks in 2053.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	3	3	7	1	3	1	2	1	6	3	6	1

Movement: 4/40 (4/25 swimming)

Skills: Infiltrating 2, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Armor (3/4), Petrification

Weaknesses: Vulnerability (Own Gaze)

BIRDMAN

Eptesicus avehomo

Habitat: Forests and cities

Range: North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The birdman is a large bat whose body length averages 60 centimeters with a wingspan of up to 2 meters and a weight of up to kilogram. It has short, soft fur that ranges in color from a dark brown to a tawny red. Its head resembles a fox with a pointed snout and short angular ears. It has a short thumb with a hook-like claw at the end of the wingtips. Its hooks are used to cling to tree branches rather than for hunting. The wings are black

in color, and the wing membrane connects the forelimb to the back leg and the back leg to the 5-centimeter tail.

Habits: The birdman is neither a bird nor a man but an Awakened version of the common big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*). It has also been called the manbat, which is closer to its appearance. The birdman is primarily an insectivore, though it loves fruit. It uses echolocation to find prey. It also has a good sense of smell, and it will occasionally be found in orchards, vineyards, and even some dumpsters eating fruit. It is nocturnal, and during the daytime it sleeps in caves, underpasses, or dark enclosures.

Birdmen travel in groups of up to twenty members for mutual protection. If one is attacked, the others swoop down, beating the attacker with their wings or chirping very loudly to drive the predator away. After breeding season, from the end of winter to spring, birdman females form maternal colonies and give birth to one or two offspring. The young are able to fly in three to four weeks. Males don't participate in raising the young.

These bats are fascinated by metahumans and can often be found circling metahuman dwellings in the early evening or morning. They will sometimes swoop towards unsuspecting people for a closer look. This behavior is often mistaken for aggression, and this has led to many birdman deaths. If cornered or wounded, a birdman can deliver a painful bite that often carries malaria (p. 132, *Augmentation*). A birdman flock can sometimes be driven away by loud noises.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	5	4	1	2	5	1	3	1	6	3	9	1

Movement: 25/55 (flight)

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon 3, Flight 3, Gestalt Consciousness, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Echolocation), Pestilence (Malaria), Sonic Projection

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Fragile (1)

BLACK ANNIS

Papio annisae

Habitat: Dense forests and caves

Range: Central and southern regions of North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The black annis stands 1.7 meters tall and weighs 60 kilograms. It has thick black hair with thick tufts across the tops of its shoulders, head, and hands. It has broad shoulders and disproportionately long arms. Its canine teeth are hypertrophied to efficiently kill prey. Its digits are tipped with sharp, hard claws, and it lacks opposable thumbs. Its snout has red and orange streaks which become brighter upon sexual maturity. It has large eyes and facial features resembling a great ape. Though bipedal, it sometimes travels on all fours.

Habits: The black annis is exclusively carnivorous, using speed and strength to catch and kill prey. From squirrels and owls to deer and even bear cubs, these primates will eat any living thing they can overpower. Some evidence suggests that the primate is cannibalistic toward members of its species that invade its territory. Based upon its appearance, parabiologists believe that the black annis is related to the mandrill, though how it came to North America remains unclear.

The black annis is a solitary hunter and highly territorial. It will give a display of threat by throwing rocks or howling, but that behavior is exhibited only to establish dominance over another black annis. For other creatures such as metahumans, it either

avoids or attacks on sight, depending on the apparent strength of the intruder.

The only time more than one black annis occupies the same territory is for mating. The female seeks out the male, though once impregnated the female is chased off. Females give birth to one offspring a year in a temporary burrow. The black annis is an aggressive hunter at birth, and it becomes independent within a week when the mother abandons it. The black annis matures in five months and then fights to establish its own territory.

The black annis prefers to live in caves or burrows beneath trees. It is nocturnal, and it has exceptional night vision. A black annis' territory often inspires a feeling of dread.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
7	4	5	9	2	3	2	3	2	6	4	8	2

Movement: 20/40

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Intimidation 3, Perception 3, Running 3, Shadowing 2, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Fear, Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 6P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

BOGIE

Canis auspicii

Habitat: Light woods and plains

Range: Northeastern and central portions of North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The bogie is a large canine, standing 125 centimeters at the shoulder and weighing 95 kilograms. It has a pair of small horn-like protrusions from its brow that are 2 centimeters long and covered in a velvety coating. It has short, black, bristly fur.

Habits: The bogie is a carnivore resembling an oversized rottweiler that hunts in packs of up to four members. One member howls to panic the prey and herd the victim into an ambush. Bogies attack like wolves, attempting to hamstring their targets and then bite the target's face and throat to suffocate with powerful jaws. As a pack, bogies are fearless, and they will not back down from any large creature. When hunting solo, however, a bogie will assess a threat first before attacking or yielding.

The bogie's howl induces fear in any creature that hears it. Legends have long stated that the bogie's howl prophesizes death and disaster. Statistical evidence has shown that the frequency of mishaps and malfunctions increases in proximity of bogies.

Bogies have heightened awareness—their horns are too soft to properly function as weapons. Dissection has shown that these horns are organs that are highly sensitive to motion through ultrasound. They are also posited to improve the animal's hearing.

Also of note, there is a supernatural kinship between normal canines and bogies. Even security dogs will not bark at the approach of a bogie, nor will either of them fight the other.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	5	4	4	2	4	2	3	2	6	4	8	2

Movement: 15/48

Skills: Infiltration 1, Perception 3, Running 2, Shadowing 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Animal Control (Mundane Dogs), Accident, Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Motion Detection, Smell), Fear, Movement (Self)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Horseradish, Mod), Allergy (Wolfsbane, Mod)



EMPEROR EAGLE

Aquila Imperis

Habitat: Open country with small woods or forest edges

Range: The Carpathian Basin and southern Spain, with rare sightings in Central Asia

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The emperor eagle is a large bird of prey with an average wingspan of 4 meters and a weight of 24 kilograms. It is generally dark brown with white scapular markings and a cream-colored nape of the neck. Juveniles have charcoal grey markings on their wings and tail that fade with maturity.

Habits: While similar in morphology and ecology to the Eastern and Spanish Imperial Eagle, the emperor eagle is vastly larger and more powerful, justifying its name. An emperor eagle hunts small- and medium-sized game, preferring deer and wild boar. It is highly skilled at identifying hidden prey, and it has the ability to prevent storms while it hunts. It is territorial, usually encompassing a grove of trees as its empire and building nests in the tallest trees. It will challenge intruding aerial and terrestrial predators, including wolves. The glare from an emperor eagle may even intimidate the rare metahuman who enters its territory.

Females lay two to three eggs which weigh 2 kilograms each and hatch after 60 days. The emperor eagle migrates south for the winter to places like the eastern edge of Africa and India.

Like the smaller imperial eagles, the emperor is on the edge of extinction. Pollution in China and the Middle East has terminated migration there. Poaching, urban encroachment, egg theft for food and tesma, and residue poisons have reduced their numbers to below 200 breeding pairs throughout Europe. Some of the European programs for other wildlife have helped the emperor eagle; however, much more is needed to bring the species back from the edge. A captive breeding program in Spain has had limited success.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	5	3	3	3	2	4	5	2	6	4	5	1

Movement: 25/50 (flight)

Skills: Counterspelling 2, Flight 4, Intimidation 3, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Depth Perception), Immunity (Fire), Influence, Magical Guard (Self), Mind Link, Search, Weather Control

Weaknesses: Vulnerability (Toxins)

FENRIR WOLF

Canis lupus aesiri

Habitat: Forests

Range: Germany, Scandinavia, and far Eastern Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The fenrir wolf is a large canine, standing 150 centimeters tall with a length of 220 centimeters. It can weigh up to 150 kilograms. It has short, dense fur that can be white, cream, red, brown, grey, black, or a mottled pattern mix. It has well-developed canines and curved claws. Females are typically smaller than males.

Habits: The fenrir wolf is the Awakened version of the common European wolf. It is a nocturnal carnivore that hunts in packs of six to eight members. It is fearless, and it attacks all manner and sizes of targets. It is territorial, and packs have fought over territory, though deaths are infrequent. It is highly resistant to magic, strong

beyond its size, able to crush bone in its jaws, and the most feared predator in Europe. Farmers hire armed security to protect cattle from roving packs.

Fenrir wolf packs have both an alpha male and an alpha female. Females can have up to six pups in a den that is dug among bushes or rocks. While the male will bring home food for the caring female and pups, he will also kill off weaker pups or entire litters if necessary so that only the strongest join the pack. Fenrir wolves have a lifespan of 10 years.

The numbers of fenrir wolves are kept low by a shortage of suitable habitat and hunting. As with the golden boar, the German government's protection of the Black Forest and Saeder-Krupp's species protection program has helped stabilize fenrir wolf numbers, though not without some resistance. S-K has also worked out a breeding program to produce fenrir wolves for security. The corporation takes pups that would have otherwise been killed by an alpha male. Such security animals fetch a high price on the market, as it's almost impossible to tame a wild fenrir.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
7	5	4	8	2	5	2	5	2	6	5	9	2

Movement: 15/60

Skills: Counterspelling 3, Infiltration 2, Intimidation 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell), Fear, Magical Guard (Self), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 6P, AP 1)

FIREBIRD

Paradisus igni

Habitat: Woodlands, particularly those with regular forest fires

Range: The Americas

Frequency: Common

Identification: Firebirds have a slightly hooked beak and the sharp talons of a raptor. Mature specimens have a wingspan of 180 centimeters and a length, including tail feathers, of up to a meter. Adults can weigh up to 3 kilograms. The dorsal side of their wings and back are a rich red-brown which brightens to a fiery orange on the breast, head, and lower back. An extended brilliant yellow feather trails from each wing, and the tail feathers also brighten to the same shade of yellow.

Habits: These crepuscular raptors are insectivores. They use their talons and beak to pull apart rotting logs and peel away tree bark to reach insect colonies and grubs. In some instances, firebirds will grab a tree's bark in their talons and then flap their wings to tear a strip off, allowing access to the insects inside.

Firebirds are communal, establishing family groups of four to six members in a single tree. Such groups become very territorial and attempt to ward off intruders that come within 10 meters of their tree with mock swooping attacks. Intruders who ignore the warnings and come within 3 meters are aggressively attacked by the community. Firebirds are not selective of their targets in these attacks, and they will defend even against large carnivores and metahumans.

Though firebirds cannot produce flame, they are absolutely fascinated by it. These avians will often approach small campfires and happily fly through the flames. Bonfires or raging forest fires can attract hundreds of the birds from dozens of kilometers away. The birds are immune to the flames, but there is no known physiological basis for their attraction.

Firebird breeding season is in the early spring. Males perform extensive aerial acrobatics at this time to attract mates. After mating, females lay two eggs on a ground nest. Eggs hatch after two weeks, and the young gain their independence about a month after. The male and often other members of the community become even more territorial after eggs are laid until the chicks leave the nest.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 5 4 2 1 3 2 3 2 6 6 7 1

Movement: 10/40 (flight)

Skills: Flight 3, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Immunity (Fire), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 1, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Fragile (2)

GOLDEN BOAR

Sus aureus

Habitat: Forests

Range: Central Europe, the Atlas Mountains, and Asia

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The golden boar is an Awakened species of wild boar (*Sus scrofa*). It averages 220 centimeters in length, a meter tall at the shoulder, and a weight of approximately 170 kilograms. It has a coarse coat of grey-brown fur overlaid with red-brown hair. It has four tusks that are metallic gold in color and similar in size to the tusks of the non-Awakened species. The lower tusks can reach lengths of 25 centimeters, and they are ground sharp against the upper tusks.

Habits: The golden boar is a nocturnal omnivore, subsisting on roots, grubs, and vegetation. Carrion, reptiles, and small deer are also targeted when available. It stays close to dense forests, using its camouflage to hide from predators. It will attack metahumans only during mating season or to protect its young. When it does, it attempts to gore and maim victims rather than kill.

The golden boar is an opportunistic hunter that will not go out of its way to chase swift prey. These animals live in sounders (groups) of twenty members, including sows and offspring. Boars dwell apart, except during mating season. Sows have two to three mating cycles a year and three to five offspring per litter.

Both the upper and lower canine tusks contain high concentrations of copper, iron, zinc, manganese, tungsten, and even cadmium. Parabiologists believe that the tusks act as a storage organ for these heavy metals to remove excess metals and return them to the body as needed. This could be related to the golden boar's uncanny healing abilities. These tusks are harder than normal teeth, allowing a golden boar to dig in tougher soil or break through thicker undergrowth.

Even with the ability to magically hide and regenerate, the golden boar was hunted to the point of extinction for its tusks, which are used as telesma and smelted to extract the metals. Weapon foci are often crafted from tusks, using both the metal for the blade and the bone for the handle. Golden boars continue to exist in Europe only with the help of the German government's protection of the Black Forest and Saeder-Krupp's species protection program; Asian populations have not fared much better. Population estimates suggest that there are about 300 mating pairs in the wild, though it has been difficult to track the golden boar because of their shy behavior and magical abilities.

There have been several failed attempts to introduce the golden boar to North America or Australia, where the wild boar was shipped previously. None of the locations where the wild boar was previously introduced show any sign of this Awakened variant.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS Init IP
6 5 4 8 1 5 2 5 2 6 9 1

Movement: 10/45

Skills: Counterspelling 4, Perception 3, Running 2, Shadowing 3, Tracking 1, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Concealment (Self), Magical Guard (Self), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP 0), Regeneration

HOOP SNAKE

Natrix circumflexis

Habitat: Wooded, hilly terrain

Range: Southern and western regions of North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: When stretched out, hoop snakes are about 160 centimeters in length and over 20 kilograms in weight. Specimens have a bullet-shaped head, and they are clearly more muscular and thicker than other snake breeds of similar length. Their black eyes are protected by a bony ridge, and their scales are larger than the scales of most other snakes. They range in color and pattern from a bluish-green to a dark brown. Hoop snakes are most easily identified when they prepare to move downhill—either to escape a predator or charge a prey. In either case, the snake grabs its tail in its mouth to form a circle. The creature then turns this “hoop” vertical and rolls down the hill.

Habits: These serpents are venomous, diurnal predators. Their primary prey are small mammals and lizards, including squirrels, small rabbits, and geckos. After a quick strike with its venomous fangs, the hoop snake will unhinge its jaw and swallow its prey whole. As these serpents avoid climbing trees, they don't feed on birds very often.

Hoop snakes are rarely capable of any degree of stealth. When slithering, their rough scales scrape loudly as they move against one another. The noise is easily audible from up to 10 meters away. To overcome this, they sometimes use their rolling locomotion to quickly charge a prey animal. Once they get up to speed, they can either roll over a victim—often stunning or killing it—or straighten out and surprise their prey.

Hoop snakes have little interest in metahumanity. Though there are records of metahumans dying from hoop snake bites and numerous reports of vehicles damaged by hoop snakes, there are no confirmed reports of unprovoked attacks.

These animals breed in late April, when males compete in exhibitions of rolling to attract females. Females lay clutches of ten to twenty eggs in late June, generally in burrows dug in forest soil. These eggs hatch in the early fall, and the young, which are 20 centimeters in length, immediately begin to fend for themselves.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS Init IP
3 3 3 3 1 3 2 3 1 6 6 1

Movement: 3/20 (rolling)

Skills: Infiltration 1, Perception 2, Shadowing 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Venom

Note: –1 Reach

LESHY

Incola silvestris

Habitat: Dense forests

Range: Global

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The modern creatures identified as leshies are short humanoids with a dark complexion, rough skin, and green-hued, moss-like hair. They are typically about 150 centimeters in height, roughly 60 kilograms in weight, and primarily arboreal. Specimens often wear clothing composed primarily of natural materials that aid concealment in their native forest environs. In some cases, they have been observed to use simple tools, particularly traps set in defense of their homes.

Habits: There have been no instances of leshies observed in urban environments; they are clearly creatures of the forest with little inclination to change their habitat. Leshies are most active when gathering food during the early morning, though they may be active at any time when food is rarer. All evidence points to the species being exclusively vegetarian.

These creatures live in small familial groups of up to eight members, though their breeding patterns remain unclear. They definitely exhibit characteristics of verbal communication. However, computational analyses of recordings have not yet identified any consistent usage of mimetic patterns. This has led to the conclusion that their language skills remain undeveloped.

In spite of their vegetarian lifestyle, these creatures are fiercely territorial. They set elaborate traps and even throw rocks and pointed branches at metahumans and other species which intrude too close to their dens. Many of the specimens encountered are accomplished magicians. While most of their magic is tied to illusions, they use sorcery combat spells when threatened.

Though no specimens have survived in captivity, there have been genetic analyses performed on a few recovered samples. The results are somewhat inconsistent, but they clearly classify the leshy as a primate. Most paranaturalist studies conclude that these entities are a strain of Awakened old world monkey. However, this is inconsistent with their global distribution. The genetic results are probably too divergent for leshies to be a variant metahuman strain.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	2	6	4	7	2

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 3, Throwing Weapons 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Confusion, Sapience

Weaknesses: Uneducated

Note: Roughly 20 percent are magically active with Sorcery 3 and Conjuring 3. They typically summon plant spirits and cast healing or illusion spells.

MARTICHORAS

Martichoras hastae

Habitat: Forests

Range: Northern half of North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: A martichoras strongly resembles the mundane lion (*Panthera leo*) from which it has Awakened. Mature adults stand 110 centimeters at the shoulder and can grow to a length of 220 centimeters. They weigh well over 200 kilograms. Their tail

is an additional 50 centimeters in length and tipped by a dense batch of venomous quills. Like sharks, martichoras specimens have multiple rows of teeth that are continuously lost and replaced. All specimens have a shaggy golden brown coat which fades darker along the animal's flanks. Males have a distinctive dark brown mane along the head and neck.

Habits: Martichoras are extremely aggressive diurnal carnivores. These animals form prides, much like mundane lions. However, their social and gender roles are very different. In this Awakened species, the males are subservient to the females, and they handle all hunting responsibilities. Male martichoras sometimes hunt alone, often climbing trees and patiently waiting for prey to approach. More often, however, they use pack tactics to flush animals towards packmates that lie in concealment. Prey animals are killed with powerful rending claws and fangs.

These hunters never use their quills on prey. Instead, the quills are saved for rare occasions when a defense mechanism is required. In those instances, the victim is always left behind, never consumed by martichoras.

Successful kills are always returned to the pride's lair before they are consumed. There, the regal female is given the first opportunity to devour the choicest portions before the hunters are permitted to feed. Only after the female and hunters have fed are cubs permitted to feed.

Each pride of martichoras is dominated by a single female. Up to four males are kept as her harem and food providers. Young stay with a pride only until they reach maturity. At that point, females will attempt to establish their own pride, often coming into conflict with their mothers. Newly matured males are invariably chased away to join another pride.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
7	5	5	6	1	4	2	3	1	6	9	1

Movement: 10/60

Skills: Climbing 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Shadowing 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 6P, AP 0), Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: 1 Combat Turn, Power: 7, Effect: Physical Damage, Nausea)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Pollution, Mild)

Note: +1 Reach

MERLIN HAWK

Falco velox

Habitat: Fields and light forests

Range: In Europe, the northern British Isles and Tír na nÓg in the spring and southern France in the winter. In North America, the northeastern region of the continent in spring and the southern region in the winter.

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The merlin hawk measures a half-meter in length with a meter wingspan and weighs an average of 4 kilograms. Males have a blue-grey back and wing feathers with a reddish brown underbelly. The females are dark brown with a tan underbelly. Both have a strong eye stripe, with a reddish tinge in males. Males change colors during the spring to red with a white spotted chest.

Habits: The merlin hawk is the Awakened version of the common merlin (*Falco columbarius*). While the merlin can be considered

two different species—North American and European variants—the merlin hawk appears to be one species that was simultaneously Awakened on both continents.

The merlin hawk is a carnivorous diurnal predator, hunting small rodents and birds. It is also known to eat devil and demon rats. It is territorial, and it uses its extraordinary speed to drive all other birds of prey from its territory.

Males and females live as mated pairs from spring to winter. Breeding pairs also hunt cooperatively, as one flushes out prey animals towards the mate. Males compete with complex aerial dances to attract females and resolve disputes.

Merlin hawks sometimes take over an abandoned nest instead of making their own nests in trees or grassy hills—especially in Europe. The female will have four ruddy brown eggs at a time. The male will provide food for her and the chicks. Chicks become fledglings in 30 days, and they will be dependent upon their parents for up to four weeks. Older siblings sometimes help their parents feed and protect fledglings.

The merlin hawk has been noted to be magically active and capable of casting spells and summoning spirits. They appear to use these talents only when threatened or provoked. Because of this magical activity, some believe that the merlin hawk is sapient, as it does take considerable intelligence to use magic to this degree. The Society of Hawks in New York has worked to protect hawks and paid particular attention to the merlin hawk. So far, no one has petitioned for the merlin hawk to be given metahuman rights. More psychoanalysis and attempts at communication will need to be performed before such a resolution is feasible.

Merlin hawks are particularly vulnerable to willow wood and poisons. Poachers of their feathers—a valued telesma—have used old-fashioned bows with willow wood arrows to hunt them. It is also noted that merlin hawks can sense and react negatively to creatures with unusually low essence due to the effects of drugs, implants, or the Infected.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	7	3	1	4	6	4	4	3	6	5	9	1

Movement: 30/70 (flight)

Skills: Astral Combat 3, Flight 5, Perception 4, Spellcasting 4, Summoning 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Animal Control (Avians), Dual Natured, Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 2P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Fragile (1), Vulnerability (Willow-Wood Weapons, Poisons)

Note: Merlin Hawks can cast any Detection or Illusion spell.

MIMIC SNAKE

Serpentes fistulae

Habitat: Forests

Range: East of the Mississippi River in North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: Mimic snakes are constrictors that can grow up to 4 meters in length and weigh in excess of 40 kilograms. Their scales are dark green with a pattern of black and yellow markings that serves as effective camouflage in their native woods. Though they have pronounced fangs, they are not venomous.

Habits: The mimic snake uses its talent to replicate the sounds of prey animals for hunting. The solitary predator uses its Awakened talent, often mimicking mating calls, to draw prey animals close.

Wild turkeys are its most common victim, though squirrels, opossums, raccoons, and quail are all targeted. Once an animal is nearby, the mimic snake grabs it in its coils and kills the prey by constriction. Prey animals are swallowed whole once the mimic unhinges its jaw. The serpent also uses its angled teeth to force any prey that continues to fight towards its digestive tract.

Though these snakes are generally terrestrial, they sometimes hide in trees, particularly if there are aggressive predators in the area. In many cases, as a defense mechanism the mimic snake imitates the hunting cry of a large aggressive predator—the piasma is a common choice. This often scares away a predator.

Mimic snakes have little interest in metahumans or any other animal that is too large to swallow. They attack large animals only if threatened. In spite of this, some mimic snakes have been observed in cities, primarily preying on pigeons, rats, and other vermin. Atlanta has deliberately introduced several specimens into a few public parks to cut down on pigeons.

Like boa constrictors, female mimic snakes incubate their eggs within their bodies. There may be up to 60 snakes in a litter, each of which can be 60 centimeters in length. The young are immediately independent, and they grow quickly based upon the availability of prey.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	4	4	5	1	4	2	2	1	6	4	8	1

Movement: 8/15

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Mimicry

NOVOPOSSUM

Didelphis ericae

Habitat: Forests, though they sometimes venture into suburban areas

Range: Eastern and southeastern portions of North America

Frequency: Common

Identification: Novopossums are an Awakened variant of the mundane common opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*). The Awakened variants grow slightly longer, with a body length of 75 centimeters and a weight of up to 6 kilograms. Their hairless prehensile tails can extend for an additional 45 centimeters. Novopossums are covered in a dense grey pelt which is often matted and darkened with dirt and the remains of prey. Their red eyes are small and set deep into the skull, while their enlarged canines protrude fang-like from their mouths. The novopossum's limbs are also disproportionately longer than those of the mundane opossum, allowing a greater reach with their claws when confronting prey.

Habits: Though the novopossum is physiologically an omnivore like its mundane relatives, the variant is more aggressive and clearly prefers live prey. Their preferential prey animal is the metapede, an armored millipede that rolls into a ball as a defense mechanism. To defeat the metapede's armor, the novopossum uses its powerfully acidic saliva to melt through the arthropod's exoskeleton. The novopossum then finishes splitting the shell and devours the animal's soft tissues.

Like the mundane opossum, the novopossum is nocturnal. It is also a solitary and territorial animal. A novopossum will never use an opossum's characteristic ploy of playing dead. Rather, it loudly hisses at any animal or metahuman that threatens it and

then uses its acidic spit to attack. If this fails to deter the intruder, a novopossum will typically ascend a tree and continue the assault from a distance.

These animals mate opportunistically with no set breeding season. Females give birth to litters of as many as twelve pups up to three times annually. After a two-week gestation, the pups are born and then migrate to their mother's pouch. They grow to weaning over the next three months and then leave the pouch. Young travel with their mother for two to three months after weaning and then find their own territory.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
1 4 4 2 1 2 2 2 1 6 3 6 1

Movement: 2/7

Skills: Infiltration 3, Intimidation 2, Exotic Ranged Weapon 2, Perception 1, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Corrosive Spit, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Immunity (Pathogens)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Fragile (2)

PHOENIX

Phoenix aureus

Habitat: Open woodlands

Range: Eastern Asia and Northern Africa

Frequency: Rare

Identification: An adult phoenix has a wingspan in excess of 4 meters and a weight of about 20 kilograms. Its standing height is about 130 centimeters with an additional 2 meters of tail plumage. A sharply hooked beak clearly identifies the phoenix as a predatory bird. Its head is golden, and it flows to red at the shoulders and gradually deepens to a rich blue on the tail, much like the shading of a tongue of flame. The plumage has an iridescent sheen that gives the bird a faint glow in direct sunlight.

Habits: A phoenix is a diurnal predator that actively hunts mammals and smaller birds during the early hours of the day. It always uses its aura of fire to cook prey prior to consumption. This may be due to physiological necessity or simply an instinctive procedure of unknown origin. Land-bound prey animals are usually killed when the phoenix snatches them in its powerful talons, so the aura is not believed to be instrumental in hunting.

Outside of mating season, phoenixes are solitary. They do not maintain a consistent nesting ground. Rather, they migrate in pursuit of available prey animals. They are not territorial, but they will defend themselves with their fire aura, beak, and talons when attacked.

Pairs mate in the spring and stay together until the following fall. Nests are found in rocky terrain, often on cliff faces but sometimes on open ground. There is usually only a single egg in a phoenix clutch. The young hatch after three weeks. They remain in the nest, fed and guarded by both parents for roughly five months. Once the young leave the nest, the parents incinerate it and go their separate ways.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
3 5 4 4 1 4 2 2 4 6 5 8 1

Movement: 25/60 (flight)

Skills: Flight 3, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Energy Aura (Flame), Enhanced Senses (Vision Enhancement)

Note: Phoenix feathers, particularly tail feathers, are popular ingredients in alchemical formulae. This has led to a substantial poaching market.

PIASMA

Ursus piasma

Habitat: Temperate woodlands and mountains

Range: North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The plasma is very obviously a descendant of the black bear (*Ursus americanus*). It shares the bear's muscular body type, dense coat of fur, and powerful claws and muzzle. However, the Awakened plasma is clearly a distinct breed. With an adult length of 3 meters, a height of 150 centimeters at the shoulder, and a weight of 600 kilograms, the plasma more than doubles the size of most mundane black bears. Piasma are further distinguished by a steel-grey pelt color and a pair of powerful boar-like tusks mounted on its lower jaw.

Habits: The plasma is an aggressive nocturnal predator. It depends upon its enormous power, lethal natural armaments, and surprising speed to hunt virtually any animal it finds. While it exhibits a strong preference for live prey, the plasma does not hesitate to scavenge through the trash of metahuman society. Piasmas often establish their lairs near metahuman settlements or waste dumps.

Outside of their mating and breeding season, plasma are not particularly territorial. They are solitary hunters, as there are few things that pose a threat to a plasma. Their private nature and flexibility may be tied to their ability to survive near heavily armed metahuman cities. In spite of that combination, metahumans have been subject to plasma attacks. In some instances, this has been due to the plasma feeling threatened, but at times it has simply been because the metahuman was the most readily available prey animal.

The plasma mating season is in the late summer. At this time, males become far more territorial, often coming into conflict with other males over the privilege of mating with mature females. These conflicts are sometimes protracted and extremely destructive. When a conflict occurs near metahuman cities, they can result in significant property damage. Young are born in the late winter, and they mature over the following year. Females with broods of up to four cubs become extremely protective of their young.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS Init IP
12 5 5 12 1 4 2 4 2 6 9 3

Movement: 10/35

Skills: Infiltration 3, Intimidation 3, Perception 3, Shadowing 2, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Armor (3/5), Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision, Wide-Band Hearing), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 10P, AP -2)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

Note: +1 Reach





PIXIE

No Accepted Taxonomy

Habitat: Forests

Range: Major population centers in the United Kingdom, Tír na nÓg, and Portland, Tír Tairngire

Frequency: Rare

Identification: Pixies are small humanoids resembling miniature elves that are approximately 45 centimeters tall with two pairs of iridescent wings—like a dragonfly’s—emerging from their back. Their average wingspan is 1 meter, and flight requires the manipulation of magical energies. They appear to be of various ethnicities.

Habits: Pixies are extraordinarily rare, present only in the wilds of the British Isles and some locations in Western Europe. They are a sapient species living a simple lifestyle akin to the early Bronze Age in Europe. They are organized mainly into clans and family groups with paternal lineage or polyamorous arrangements.

Villages of pixies are built of wood and stone and found both within the forest’s canopy and below its roots. Regardless of their home’s location, pixies move mainly by flight or floating rather than walking. Pixies also have a much higher percentage with the ability to manipulate magic for sorcery and conjuring than metahumans. Their communities are largely self-sufficient due to a number of eco-friendly farming practices. Most pixie communities avoid metahuman society and work to remain isolated from it.

A few groups have succeeded in creating a recognized self-governing community, such as France’s Brocéliande Forest in 2066. Depending upon the location, many pixies speak more than one metahuman language, including English, French, German, Sperethiel, and Upvehu. They are also familiar with various Gaelic languages that are similar to their racial tongue.

A few pixies have become fascinated with metahuman advancements in technology and tools. Augmentation, trideo, and virtual reality are of particular interest to these specimens. Unfortunately, their delicate physiology, diminutive size, and cultural differences makes life difficult for those who choose to experience metahuman culture directly. Two-thirds of the pixies who travel among metahumans return to pixie society within a year. Some of them suffer psychological distress after returning because of the sensory overload they had experienced.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	5	5	2	5	3	3	4	4	6	2	8	1

Movement: 10/25 (flight)

Skills: Close Combat Group 2, Etiquette 3 (Tribal +2), Flight 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Outdoors Group 3, Shadowing 2

Powers: Concealment (Self), Sapience

Note: France is the only nation that issues permanent SINS to pixies. Tír Tairngire has begun issuing criminal SINS to pixies accused and convicted of a crime. NeoNET is the only AAA megacorporation with any pixie corporate citizens.

PRICURICU

Hylocichla cynophilus

Habitat: Woodlands and grasslands

Range: In the summer, these birds dwell in the northern reaches of North America. During the North American winter, they migrate to the northern portion of South America.

Frequency: Common

Identification: This small bird is pale brown with feathers that fade to white along the trailing edge of its wings and tail. Adult pricuricus average 20 centimeters in length and 30 centimeters in wingspan. They weigh about 45 grams. Their eyes are disproportionately large for their bodies, up to 15 millimeters in diameter, which gives them an owl-like appearance. Males and female pricuricus share the same coloration and size.

Habits: Genetic analyses have revealed that the pricuricu are an Awakened variant of the wood thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*). Like their parental species, they are preferential insectivores. Their large eyes, however, grant dramatically improved night vision. This has enabled the variant to become a nocturnal hunter.

During the day, pricuricu hide in their nests—their sensitive eyes leave them unable to function in daylight. At night pricuricu can hunt in flocks of up to 100 specimens. These flocks compete directly with bats as nighttime insectivores. A large flock can sweep through the air over a forest and decimate the local insect population.

The pricuricu’s call is probably an adaptation to help them effectively compete with bats while hunting. While in their flocks, pricuricu constantly cry out with a very high-frequency call that is above the normal hearing range of unaugmented humans. Repeated observations have shown that this frequency directly interferes with the echolocation abilities of bats. When subjected to the sound, bats either attempt to turn and flee or, more often, crash.

Pricuricu mate in their northern migratory grounds near the start of May. Females build the nest and select from males who perform an intricate aerial dance accompanied by high-frequency calls. There are usually two to four eggs in a clutch. Young hatch within two weeks and achieve maturity within another four weeks.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	4	4	1	1	4	1	1	1	6	3	8	1

Movement: 10/25 (flight)

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon (Sonic Projection) 3, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Gestalt Consciousness, Sonic Projection

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Fragile (3)

TARANTELLA

Saltator lycosa

Habitat: Damp environments

Range: Throughout Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The tarantella is a large spider with an average body length of 20 centimeters, a leg span of 35 centimeters, and a weight of up to 4 kilograms. Their segmented bodies sport a row of spines that are 1 to 2 centimeters in length. Their coloration ranges from dark brown to black. Their fangs contain special venom.

Habits: The tarantella is an Awakened species of European tarantula (*Lycosa narbonensis*). It lives in burrows that are around 50 centimeters deep in woods and fields. They are nocturnal, and they patrol an area around their burrows, looking for prey. They live on a diet of invertebrates, insects, and small birds and lizards. They climb trees to prey on nesting birds. During the winter, the tarantella closes its burrow and hibernates.

The tarantella is known for its complex “crabwalk” mating ritual. After courtship, the female kills and consumes the male.

The female tarantella then guards an egg sack containing 50–200 eggs for about seven weeks. When the offspring hatch, they stay for some time with the mother, feeding off the yolk sack before dispersing. A tarantella molts several times a year before maturing at four years of age. The spikes on its back serve a similar purpose to the urticating hairs on new world spiders: they irritate predators attempting to eat the spider.

The tarantella is also known for its poisonous venom that causes spastic movements before a victim dies. Tarantellas tend to avoid humans and large animals and flee into their burrows when threatened. If provoked, they will puff up and stand on their hind legs in an attempt to menace before biting.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	4	4	0	2	3	1	2	2	6	3	7	1

Movement: 8/15

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Shadowing 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 1P, AP 0), Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: Immediate, Power: 7, Effect: Paralysis), Wall Walking

Weaknesses: Fragile (2)

Note: –1 Reach

VOLLEYING PORCUPINE

Hystrix Sagittarius

Habitat: Woodlands and rocky terrain

Range: Southern Europe along the Mediterranean coastline

Frequency: Common

Identification: The volleying porcupine is a large rodent averaging 110 centimeters long with a 25-centimeter tail and a weight of around 15 kilograms. It has modified hair in the form of quills that are up to 25 centimeters long; they are primarily clustered towards the rear of the animal with a set of longer quills along the head, nape, and back that can be raised up into a 50-centimeter crest. The rest of the fur is coarse and dark brown in color.

Habits: While the volleying porcupine appears similar in morphology to the North African crested porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*), it has two unique defenses. The first is a noxious musk that the volleying porcupine can emit like a skunk. Secondly, it can whip its tail and hurl groups of quills at a ranged target. It is not territorial, but if threatened, it will shake its quills and raise its crest. If that fails to scare off a predator, it will then spray it with musk or fire quills at it, depending on how close the threat is.

The volleying porcupine has no natural enemies. It is a nocturnal herbivore, eating roots and bulbs and ripping the bark off trees during the winter. Groups of volleying porcupines can overfeed on a tree, climbing higher to get at the bark and killing it. This makes them a pest to foresters. Volleying porcupines have an insatiable appetite for salt, and they will travel great distances to find a salt lick. Green Cells have used volleying porcupines to disrupt construction sites and logging in Europe, training them with salt treats.

Volleying porcupines live in burrows in wooded areas. They are social creatures living in nuclear groups of parents and children. Females create nesting chambers for the young and give birth to one or two a year. The offspring leave the den after one week,

and at this time their quills begin to harden. Young reach adult size in one to two years.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	4	2	1	2	3	1	3	2	6	4	5	1

Movement: 10/18

Skills: Climbing 2, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Quills) 4, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Natural Ranged Weapon (Quill: DV 3P, AP –2), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0), Noxious Breath

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Salt)

Note: Quills are barbed, and pulling them out inflicts 2P damage.

WODEWOSE

Cebus wodevosnis

Habitat: Temperate forests.

Range: Southern region of North America and Central America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: This meter-tall primate is powerfully muscled, and it weighs about 50 kilograms. Its short black fur is exceptionally dense, and it completely covers the animal save for the soles of its feet, palms, and face. Its mouth seems disproportionately wide, and it is filled with 44 sharply pointed teeth. The primate has a 5-centimeter tail which is not prehensile.

Habits: Genetic analysis has confirmed that the wodewose is an Awakened variant of the capuchin monkey (*Cebus capucinus*). It is a diurnal arboreal carnivore. Its primary food source is eggs stolen from bird nests, though it also preys upon insects, small mammals, and birds. These animals are extremely violent if threatened, though they are not particularly territorial. Wodewose are not sapient or tool users.

Wodewose communities typically number about 50 specimens. Members are fiercely loyal and protective of one another. All members of the community defer to a single dominant specimen of either gender. Challenges for dominance are common, particularly during the mating season; however, these conflicts are rarely lethal. If a larger predator or a group of metahumans approaches one of their arboreal communities, a large group of wodewose can attack without warning. In these instances, the creatures attempt to quickly swarm and incapacitate a predator. If there are multiple intruders, they will systematically confront one at a time, overwhelming each while ignoring the attacks of others.

In spite of their inherent resistance to disease, these primates are virulent carriers for a number of plagues, including VITAS-3 (p. 132, *Augmentation*). For this reason, the species is considered a public nuisance. Bounties are often available for wodewose pelts.

Extended study of wodewose specimens has indicated that the species seems unaffected by aging. Genetic analysis suggests that wodewose have inherent regenerative abilities very similar to those used in the Leonization technique. It's unclear if this is a paranatural or purely biological function.

Wodewose mate in the early spring. Young are born six months later, usually in litters of two. These young mature into adulthood over the next four years. Typically, the young are raised and protected by the entire community, though females are far more active in this than the males.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	3	3	5	1	4	2	3	1	6	4	7	1

Movement: 5/25

Skills: Climbing 3, Gymnastics 3, Infiltrating 2, Perception 2, Shadowing 1, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Immunity (Age, Pathogens, Toxins), Pestilence (VITAS-3)

WOLVERINE, GREATER

Gulo impii

Habitat: Subarctic woodlands or temperate mountainous woodlands

Range: Northern region of North America, Europe, and Asia, extending southward in mountainous terrain

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The greater wolverine is a squat and heavily muscled Awakened variant of the wolverine (*Gulo gulo*). Visually, it differs from the mundane version primarily in size, growing up to 90 centimeters at the shoulder and over 2 meters in length. Its dense musculature can contribute to a weight in excess of 100 kilograms. Its shaggy coat of fur is a pale brown on the back which turns gradually darker to nearly black on the underbelly and limbs. All four paws are capped with lethally sharp claws, and its mouth is filled with equally deadly teeth.

Habits: Greater wolverines are extremely aggressive and territorial diurnal omnivores. In spite of their dietary capabilities, these mammals vastly prefer a diet of fresh kills, and they will often ignore fresh fruit in favor of an opportunity to attack even exceptionally dangerous animals. These mustelids rely upon their sense of smell to track prey and then use their strength and speed to quickly overcome victims. They are phenomenally overconfident in their abilities—there are confirmed reports of greater wolverine attacks on moose, piismas, and even grizzlies. It's hardly surprising that greater wolverines consider metahumans prey animals, and metahumans are encouraged to keep their distance from these animals.

Greater wolverines never seem to fully assuage their hunger. Even after gorging themselves on a kill, they will attack any other prey they can smell. If they can't finish eating a prey animal, they will often defecate on its remains to prevent scavengers from consuming it.

Their aggression is clearly linked to their territoriality. Even during the height of mating season in the late summer, encounters between male and female greater wolverines can turn violent. In instances where the female survives the encounter, the embryos delay implantation until late winter to delay fetal development. Young are born in litters of two to three in the early spring, at which time the mother will protect them for about a year. After that, the young are chased away, and further encounters can lead to lethal conflict.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
7	6	5	5	1	4	2	4	1	6	9	2

Movement: 10/50

Skills: Infiltration 1, Perception 3, Shadowing 2, Tracking 5, Unarmed Combat 6

Powers: Armor (1/3), Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 7P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Reduced Senses (Vision)

WYRD MANTIS

Mantis malus

Habitat: Forests

Range: Central and Southern Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The wyrd mantis is a very large insect. Females are 170 centimeters tall and weigh 70 kilograms. Males are 70 centimeters tall and weigh 25 kilograms. Its chitinous armor is bright green with a yellow underbelly, though it can change its coloration. It walks on four segmented legs and has spindly forelimbs.

Habits: The wyrd mantis is the largest insect indigenous to Europe and the Awakened version of the common mantis (*Mantis religiosa*). The wyrd mantis is carnivorous, hunting insects, birds, and mammals. These insects are also quite aggressive in pursuit of metahumans as prey. Its preferred hunting technique is to camouflage itself and then leap on passing prey, hooking its victims in its arms while it bites into the victim's head. The female's bite is poisonous.

Because of their aggressiveness and the frequency of their attacks upon metahumans, most European governments offer a bounty on wyrd mantis heads. Some still theorize that the wyrd mantis is a true form Insect spirit that succeeded in coming through the astral plane. Hunting them is challenging, as they hide well and are immune to most pesticides.

Like the mundane mantis, the female devours the male during or soon after mating. The female lays between ten and fifty eggs in a frothy foam that hardens into a protective shell under a rotting log. Eggs hatch within a few weeks. Wyrd mantis young occasionally wait for siblings to hatch and devour them.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	4	4	3	2	4	2	3	3	6	4	8	2

Movement: 5/25

Skills: Gymnastics 3, Infiltration 4, Perception 3, Running 2, Shadowing 1, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Armor (2/2), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Immunity (Toxins), Influence (Females Only), Venom (Females Only)

Note: The egg sack has Hardened Armor (4).

URBAN

While all urban animals are capable of living in other environments, these have become well-adapted to living on the edge of metahuman society. Some take advantage of our waste products, others dwell within our buildings. These creatures are more often found in the sprawl than outside of it.

BANDIT

Procyon latr

Habitat: Native to forested areas but has intruded into parks and urban regions

Range: North America

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The bandit strongly resembles a large specimen of the mundane raccoon. Though its average size is approximately 1 meter in length, the telling point in distinguishing this species from the mundane version is the extended forelimbs. They terminate in hands with fully functional opposable thumbs.

Habits: Bandits are opportunistic omnivores, much like their progenitor species. The majority of their diet comes from



scavenging: fruits and nuts in the wild or whatever happens to be in a trashcan in urban environments. They are also effective swimmers, often catching unsuspecting waterfowl, fish, and amphibians from streams and rivers. Like their progenitors, bandits often clean their food in running water prior to consuming it.

In addition to scavenging food, bandits are attracted to anything that shines or sparkles. Scavenged objects are kept in a bandit's den, which is generally located in a tree, a hollow log, or occasionally an underground burrow. Though a few abandoned dens have contained expensive jewelry, far more likely treasures include bottle caps, food wrappers, and printed holographs.

Bandits are primarily nocturnal, and they possess exceptional night vision.

Bandits are particularly distinguished from raccoons in their ability to use simple tools. This talent is attributed to their manual dexterity and opposable thumb. Specimens have been observed using a stick or metal shaft as a pry bar to open containers and bits of wire to pick mechanical locks. They've also been seen using rocks to crack open hard nuts, mollusks, or food containers. In a few cases, bandits have used their environment as a tool to defeat more aggressive predators. While this ability is clearly advanced relative to most animals, it is not a sign of sapience. Many animals use tools without achieving sapience, and bandits lack any of the other characteristics of a sapient species.

While solitary bandits are commonly encountered, specimens will often travel in familial groups of up to seven members. They are aggressive only when protecting their young. In virtually all other situations, a bandit will flee a confrontation, generally diving into water or ascending into a tree.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
2	4	3	2	3	5	3	3	2	6	8	1

Movement: 3/20

Skills: Infiltration 3, Locksmith 2, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Smell)

BLACKBERRY CAT

Felis nigra

Habitat: The blackberry cat stays close to human settlements, even pretending to be a domestic stray. It lives in buildings and alleys, and it has the same diet as regular housecats.

Range: Throughout Europe

Frequency: Common

Identification: The blackberry is the same size as a regular housecat, though averaging around 15 kilograms in weight. In Southern Europe, it is jet black with slight tawny tones at the tips of its long fur, while in Northern Europe the blackberry can be snow white with dark-toned tips. It walks with its long feathery tail erect. While its behavior resembles that of a housecat, it displays extraordinary intelligence and cunning. It's nearly impossible to surprise or capture one, though like normal cats they find catnip irresistible.

Habits: The blackberry cat is an Awakened species of the wild cat (*Felis silvestris*), possibly intermingled with the domestic subspecies.

Blackberry cats still face a legacy of superstition in Southern Europe as black cats, and they have a standing bounty in some countries. In some rural places, black cats can even be burned, fear-

ing the ire of the blackberry cat. This may explain the coloration found on the species in the north.

The blackberry cat is an urban-dependant species. While it still has instincts to hunt rodents and birds, it prefers the processed products of urban living. Blackberry cats do not fear metahumans, and they take advantage of open doors and windows to partake in metahuman comforts. They walk among us like regular cats and even come up to metahumans for attention or food. Even with all this boldness, they have a sixth sense about threats and can usually avoid or evade them. They are very social creatures with ranks. While they don't move in packs, they do engage in social gatherings of ten to fifteen cats.

Blackberry cats are known to move faster than normally possible as well as project threatening images to frighten away aggressors like dogs. This phantasm ability has also been observed in males fighting over territory and females. While the phantasm appears abstract, it remains startling imagery. No use of this power has been seen in mating rituals.

They are an annoyance as well as a mystery, as they can enter locked rooms or open cabinets and containers to steal food. The superstition surrounding the blackberry cat is not totally unfounded, as it is theorized that these cats can influence metahumans to provide food or shelter. Observance of their vocalization and behavior has recorded only typical cat meows and purrs, suggesting that a subconscious connection may be induced through physical contact.

Blackberry cats have similar breeding habits as housecats, with a spring and summer mating season. They find warm, secluded places to give birth to litters of six to eight kittens.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
1	5	5	2	3	6	3	5	2	6	4	11	1

Movement: 15/30

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 4, Spellcasting 3, Tracking 3

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Influence, Innate Spell (Combat Sense, Phantasm), Movement (Self), Natural Weapon (Claws: 3P, AP 0), Psychokinesis

Weaknesses: Addiction (Catnip, Mild), Fragile (1)

DEMON RAT

Rattus diabolis novo

Habitat: Urban and rural areas

Range: Global

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The demon rat is a rodent species. It averages 90 centimeters in length with up to a meter-long tail. It typically weighs about 5 kilograms. It has a full body of fur that comes in a variety of colors and patterns and a pair of tiny horns located slightly above the eyes.

Habits: Demon rats are the result of a widespread surge expression of the paranormal devil rat. They are just as cunning and intelligent as devil rats, though they have a lot more hair. They have a heightened awareness that grants a knack to avoid traps and a nimbleness to open latches and hooks. They are also far more socially organized.

Demon rats command both devil and mundane rats, creating large groups to scavenge or hunt for food. Groups of thirty or

more have been observed to work together. Demon rats have very caustic saliva, allowing them to chew through doors and cables when building a nest or hunting for food. These rodents are even more aggressive than devil rats, and they will hunt down prey through stealth or en masse rather than scavenge for food. Demon rats have been known to take on larger creatures such as dogs and cats as well as metahumans when hungry enough.

Demon rats have three annual breeding cycles with up to twenty offspring in each litter. Young mature in four weeks. Because of this proliferation and dominance over devil rats, a whole profession of rat catching was rejuvenated. Professional rat catchers with cutting-edge instruments are highly paid to quietly eliminate these pests without media attention.

Three variants are known to exist: Alpha, which is the standard demon rat; Beta, which carries VITAS-3 (p. 132, *Augmentation*); and Gamma, which can regenerate.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	3	6	6	10	1

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Climbing 2, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Corrosive Spit) 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Animal Control (Devil Rats, Rats), Concealment, Corrosive Spit, Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 4P, AP +1)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Moderate)

Note: -1 Reach. Beta Variant: Substitute Concealment with Pestilence (VITAS-3). Gamma Variant: Add Regeneration.

GABRIEL HOUND

Canis mutabilis

Habitat: Only rarely found outside of sprawls

Range: North America

Frequency: Common

Identification: These large dogs stand about a meter at the shoulder and can weigh in excess of 75 kilograms. Their short fur is generally uniform in color, though it may vary from black or dark brown to a pale grey. They are lean and well-muscled animals with large paws ending in claws that may be over a centimeter in length. Their faces have a disquieting metahuman-like appearance.

Habits: Gabriel hounds are nocturnal predators. They often dwell in abandoned buildings, junk yards, dark alleys, and empty lots—any location where prey animals are likely to be found and metahumans are unlikely to disturb them. Their preferred prey are smaller urban animals, including raccoons, devil rats, and pigeons. Generally solitary hunters, these dogs depend upon stealth and excellent night vision to identify and capture prey animals. When hunting, a gabriel hound will often maintain an illusion spell that gives it the appearance of a metahuman moving on all fours.

On some occasions, particularly when the moon is full, gabriel hounds congregate in packs of five to fifteen members. In these cases, a pack will eschew their stealthy ways, becoming far more aggressive and letting loose loud howls and barks into the night. Packs can attack anything that moves, including metahumans and small vehicles. Numerous casualties have been confirmed on such occasions, and most cities will issue warnings through the GridGuide network when packs are sighted.

Gabriel hounds breed opportunistically in the same manner as domestic dogs. Litters of five to nine pups are born two months

after mating. Pups achieve their mature size after six months. While caring for young, a mother is extremely territorial, attacking anything that approaches her young. Many times, the father hound will also assist in defense of the den.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	5	6	7	2	3	2	4	2	6	5	9	3

Movement: 10/60

Skills: Infiltration 4, Perception 4, Running 3, Shadowing 3, Spellcasting 2, Tracking 4, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Compulsion (Immobility), Concealment (Self), Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision), Movement, Innate Spell (Mask, Self Only, See Notes), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 5P, AP -1)

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

Note: Gabriel Hounds use the Mask spell to give them a metahuman appearance. They immediately drop the spell if injured.

GARGOYLE

Gargoyle saxi

Habitat: Mountains, caves, and urban areas

Range: Northern region of North America, Tír na nÓg, European cities

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: Gargoyles are hominids reminiscent of the classical architectural forms for which they are named. They are typically 2 meters in height and weigh in excess of 150 kilograms. Their hides are always a mottled grey in color with a rough stone-like appearance. Most specimens have a pair of wings extending from their shoulders which replace the arms in many cases. All gargoyles have a single horn extending from their foreheads. Gargoyles have powerful rending claws on their hands and feet that are used in hunting with their extended fangs.

Habits: Gargoyles are opportunistic, solitary, nocturnal predators. They generally lie in wait atop a building, tree, or cliff face, waiting for prey animals to pass below. When prey comes into sight, the gargoyle swoops from its hiding place to assault it. If it fails to kill on a first pass, the gargoyle will either make a second swooping attack or land to join combat. Gargoyles generally target solitary animals under 50 kilograms in weight, but they will attack groups or larger animals, including metahumans, when prey is scarce. Once a prey animal is slain, the gargoyle will return to its perch with the prey in tow to devour it.

The origins and reproductive habits of gargoyles are a mystery. Though anecdotal reports indicate that a wingless female may exist, there is no definitive evidence. Gargoyles lack external sexual characteristics, and necropsies have not revealed anything that could obviously be identified as an internal reproductive system. Genetic analyses have been remarkably inconsistent, including repeated sequencing of different tissues from a single specimen. All specimens encountered appear to be mature individuals, so even the existence of juveniles is questionable. One theory is that the gargoyles might be a terminal phase in the lifecycle of another organism that undergoes an extreme metamorphosis. If this is the case, the immature species remains a mystery.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
10	4	5	10	1	4	2	4	1	6	5	9	2

Movement: 10/50 (flight)



Skills: Infiltration 4, Flight 3, Perception 3, Shadowing 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Concealment (Self), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Hardened Armor (10), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 9P, AP -1), Noxious Breath

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Vulnerability (Iron)

INCUBUS

Incubus praetexti

Habitat: The incubus is dependent upon having its prey come to it. To expedite this, it hunts near well-trafficked areas. These can include dark alleys, dense forests, utility tunnels, derelict buildings, and natural caves.

Range: North America

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The incubus strongly resembles a land-dwelling giant octopus. With a body size that can extend up to 5 meters from head to tentacle tip, it can extend its reach to over 6 meters from tentacle hook to tentacle hook. Like an octopus, the underside of its tentacles is covered in suckers which the creature can use to grab prey, climb vertical surfaces, or hang inverted. On the center of the creature's ventral surface resides a large beak used for rending prey. Like an octopus, the incubus has large compound eyes very similar to those of vertebrates.

The creature's coloration is mottled, varying from a pale pink to near-black. This coloration may change, dependent upon its mood and health.

Habits: The incubus is an exclusive carnivore and a solitary hunter. To obtain prey animals, which can include metahumans, the organism is almost completely dependent upon its Desire Reflection power. When a suitable prey animal wanders into its range, the creature immediately attempts to use this power to identify the prey animal's yearnings and entice it to approach.

In deference to its reaction to sunlight, the incubus is active only after sunset when outdoors. However, in environments where the sun cannot penetrate, such as tunnels, it hunts at all hours. After a successful hunt, an incubus gorges itself upon the prey. Then it attempts to conceal itself, remaining generally inactive for the next one or two days as it digests its food.

Incubi are not territorial. However, they are also not particularly selective in their choice of prey animals. Anything that could fall prey to their illusions may be targeted. In many cases, an incubus can attempt to defeat a target that is well beyond its capabilities. Due to its slow rate of locomotion, this often proves fatal to the incubus.

The only time that incubi seek out their own kind is during the spring mating season. After a brief pairing, twenty to thirty eggs are laid in a quickly dug pit which is then filled and abandoned. Parents do not return to the nests, though they are generally careful to place them in darkened areas near sizeable populations of small prey animals, particularly rodents. The young, which are roughly 15 centimeters in diameter at birth, are ravenous when they first emerge, quickly seducing and devouring any available prey.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
6	2	2	8	4	5	4	4	2	6	4	7	1

Movement: 5/10

Skills: Climbing 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Shadowing 2, Tracking 2, Con 2, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Desire Reflection, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 6P, AP 0), Wall Walking

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Severe)

Note: +1 Reach

JAUCHEKAER

Lucanis fimus

Habitat: Waste and garbage dumps

Range: Global

Frequency: Common

Identification: The jauchekafer is a large black beetle. It grows to 80 centimeters in length and averages 4 kilograms in weight. Its elytra (forewings) are dark brown, and they protect the yellow-tinged hind wings. The jauchekafer males have a 40 centimeter-long powerful antler-like jaw. It has six legs that are thick and 20 centimeters long.

Habits: The jauchekafer (*jauchekäfer* is German and means "sewage bug") is a scavenger that consumes carrion and toxic wastes. Between its pincers, two appendages feed the sludge into its mouth. The jauchekafer's digestive system is very powerful and efficient. In a combination of bacteria cultures and powerful chemicals, the waste is broken down into sugars, water, salts, and gas (nitrogen oxide and carbon dioxide). It absorbs the sugars for food and water and releases the salts and gas. They can consume and process half of their mass in waste each day.

Because of their efficiency and the wide spectrum of wastes that the jauchekafer can eat, corporations and governments have distributed them as a secondary waste management. Unfortunately, due to mismanagement some escaped and can be found in sewers, dumpsters, and wastelands. Since they exist on most of the chemicals produced by metahumanity, most chemical and biological insecticides do nothing to them.

While normally they ignore metahumans, there are chemical triggers that cause unnatural aggressive behavior in the beetles. When triggered, swarms of these beetles attack anything nearby, including metahumans. Their bites, however, contain some of the worst toxins from feeding.

Jauchekafer lay up to a dozen eggs into waste materials. The eggs are not immune to toxins and pathogens. To allow the eggs to survive, they are put into mucus with bacteria. The bacteria help create nutrients as they develop. It is only when the larvae hatch and consume the mucus and waste do they develop their characteristic immunity.

Jauchekafer's only real predators are other jauchekafer, who eat the eggs and larvae whether or not they are their own. The jauchekafer is not considered a toxic species. While it consumes wastes, there has been no motivation to do anything other than clean up the mess.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	3	3	2	1	3	1	3	1	6	3	6	1

Movement: 4/8 (flight)

Skills: Climbing 2, Flight 3, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Gestalt Consciousness, Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP -1), Venom, Wall Walking

Note: -1 Reach

SCORPYRINE

Euscorpheus igneus

Habitat: Urban areas and fields

Range: Southern England and around the Mediterranean

Frequency: Common

Identification: The scorpyrine is an arachnid averaging 40 centimeters in length and weighing 100 grams. They have powerful claws and a sharp curved stinger with two large venom sacks. Its body is covered by black chitinous plates. It has six tan-colored legs. It has two large eyes and three additional pairs of eyes along the corners of its head.

Habits: Much like its normal cousins, the scorpyrine is nocturnal; it eats arthropods and insects, yet it can also eat small birds and mammals because of its large size. It will hide in the walls and cracks of an urban environment as well as under rocks in fields. It prefers to kill with its claws, stinging only in self-defense or if a prey animal becomes too much to handle.

The scorpyrine has adapted to a range of environments, but it has not migrated farther than the southern edge of the United Kingdom and the Chunnel due to the colder climate. It has moved into some of the more arid areas such as Africa, as it is more resistant to heat.

They live in semi-social groups, as they will hide in the same area during the day. The scorpyrine has up to ten live offspring, and those offspring will go through at least three molts before reaching maturity. The female carries and takes care of its offspring until the offspring's first molt.

The scorpyrine is a fairly common species, common enough that megacorporations have used it as a first line of defense on grounds. While the scorpyrine is rather skittish and would normally avoid metahumans, Universal Omnitech has developed a pheromone that makes a scorpyrine go berserk when sprayed on it.

The scorpyrine's venom is a very acidic neurotoxin that is unique, as it may contain toxins from its environment. In regards to the scorpyrine's use in security, its venom will incorporate the pheromone which grants the sting a secondary effect as an irritant.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
2	5	2	1	2	4	1	2	2	6	4	6	1

Movement: 2/15

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Immunity (Fire), Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 2P, AP 0), Venom (Vector: Injection, Speed: 1 Minute, Power: 8, Effect: Nausea, Physical Damage), Wall Walking

SHADOWHOUND

Canis umbrae

Habitat: Forested areas and abandoned urban areas

Range: Global

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: Shadowhounds are massive Awakened dogs that stand 120 centimeters at the shoulder and can weigh over 60 kilograms. Between their Awakened abilities and their natural talents, the animals are rarely seen. However, when visible they have a dark grey coat that is interspersed with splotches of black. As the animal moves, the black patterns change—the patterns are, in fact, the animal's undercoat that becomes visible as different muscle groups are flexed.

Habits: These wild dogs are nocturnal predators. Packs of up to twelve shadowhounds hunt in concert to bring down prey. Typical targets include deer, rabbits, and other mammals under 50 kilograms. In some cases, a pack may work together to bring down even larger game, including cattle, moose, and even bears. Reports of metahuman attacks remain controversial. While a number have been reported, none have been confirmed.

Shadowhound packs have a hierarchy very similar to grey wolf packs. A single alpha male dominates a shadowhound pack and holds exclusive mating rights to the pack's females. Pups are fiercely guarded by the pack, though young males leave their parents' pack upon maturation.

These animals always have a lair that conceals them from the sun where they spend the daylight hours. Typically, at least one shadowhound will stay alert to guard the pack from intruders while the remainder of the pack rests. When a pack is guarding pups, two or three shadowhounds will remain on active alert during daylight.

In many cases, a pack of shadowhounds will move into a depopulated portion of a metahuman city. The animals will claim the territory as their own and defend it against intruding animals. Their purpose in doing this is unclear, as their prey selection is sharply limited. This may be due to an instinctive tie with civilization or simply an unknown consequence of the shadowhound's Awakening.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	4	4	5	1	4	2	3	1	6	4	8	2

Movement: 10/45

Skills: Infiltration 5, Perception 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 5P, AP 0), Shadow Cloak, Silence

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Severe)

STORMCROW

Corvus procellae

Habitat: Any terrain

Range: Global

Frequency: Common

Identification: An Awakened variant of the common raven (*Corvus corax*), the stormcrow is first characterized by its larger size. Specimens can have a wingspan in excess of 150 centimeters and weigh up to 800 grams. The stormcrow's black plumage is a bit glossier than the common raven, and its bill is slightly longer and sharper. Its call is generally considered a bit more coarse and offensive by metahumans than the call of the raven.

Habits: Stormcrows are omnivores. Though they seem to prefer small burrowing prey animals such as insects and moles, they can subsist on fruits, nuts, and even carrion. Their hunting methods are often very aggressive, but individual specimens are extremely cautious when encountering larger or threatening animals.

When scavenging, a stormcrow will often take non-edible items back to its nest. Items are selected based upon their shine and color. A stormcrow nest can be filled with foil wrappers, discarded plastic packaging, bits of glass, and old optic chips. On rare occasions, a stormcrow might acquire a valuable piece of jewelry.

Stormcrows are occasionally encountered singly; however, they are more commonly found as members of a flock. In some cases, these flocks can grow to include over 100 specimens. When

such a flock forms, the stormcrows' extremely limited magical talents intermingle and become shared. In a larger group, a flock of stormcrows becomes a single dual-natured entity. This synthetic being gains the ability to control the weather to better suit the flock's needs. A flock also becomes far less fearful of large creatures. While a single stormcrow would always flee an approaching metahuman, large flocks have been known to swarm a metahuman and acquire the prey's shiny possessions.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
2 4 2 1 1 4 3 3 1 6 Special 6 1

Movement: 5/15 (flight)

Skills: Astral Combat 2, Perception 4, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Hearing), Gestalt Consciousness

Weaknesses: Fragile (1)

Note: In a flock of ten or more, stormcrows gain Dual Natured and Weather Control. Their Magic rating is equal to the number of birds in the flock divided by ten, rounded down.

WETLAND

This terrain includes places where the land is irregularly flooded. These waterlogged soil areas include bogs, swamps, and marshes. Climates are generally warm, and rainfall is always abundant.

AFANC

Crocodylus cymri

Habitat: Lakes and marshland

Range: Wales and parts of Eastern Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The afanc appears to be an Awakened crocodile with webbed feet, large claws, and a large flat tail resembling a beaver's. It grows to a length of 450 centimeters, including the tail, and weighs up to 375 kilograms. The afanc is green-brown in color and stays mostly in the water or marshes.

Habits: The name comes from the Celtic word for "water-creature." They are carnivores of exceptional cunning, living in semi-social groups of up to six adults. Their territory typically includes a body of water with enough space for nesting. They are solitary hunters. When they hunt, they know exactly where prey is in their territory. The afanc uses this talent to sneak up on prey, grab it in its powerful jaws, and drag it underwater to drown. To keep other predators from taking its kill, it digs with its claws and buries it in the mud.

The afanc primarily hunts fish and mammals, though when desperate it will eat mollusks and other shellfish. When startled, the afanc can slap its massive tail against the water to warn other in their familial group. When defending their territory or establishing rank, the afanc uses its tail to splash water at an opponent or knock its foe unconscious. Afancs are very sturdy, so such disputes rarely cause damage.

The afanc breeds once a year. Females dig out large nests of rotting vegetation and grass 1 to 2 meters in diameter and lay eight to twelve eggs. They stay close to the nest to protect it from other predators. Once the eggs have hatched, they are ignored by both parents.

Illegal hunting and poaching have not been a problem with this species, as they are very challenging prey. Ironically, more hunters are killed than afancs. Pollution from the Northern Toxic

Zone has leached into the marshes, and this keeps many of the eggs from hatching. Environmentalists are looking into the problem.

A similar species is in Southeast Asia, though it's a less aggressive hunter than the afanc.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
10 4 4 8 2 4 2 4 2 6 4 8 1

Movement: 20/45 (swimming)

Skills: Intimidation 2, Perception 4, Swimming 3, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Engulf (Water), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Smell), Hardened Armor (7), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 5P, AP -2), Search

BEHEMOTH

Alligator gigas

Habitat: Subtropical swamps, streams, and rivers

Range: The subtropical portions of North America's southeastern region

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: With a physique similar to a hippopotamus, this Awakened variant of the common alligator stands 3 meters at the shoulder and nearly 5 meters in length. With a weight of nearly 2,000 kilograms, this monstrosity is most commonly found floating on the surface of a waterway. Its skin is thicker than a mundane alligator, with a keratin layer of overlapping plates on most of the dorsal side. The mouth is filled with fangs that are accented by two tusks, each up to 50 centimeters in length, which protrude upwards from its lower jaw.

Habits: The behemoth is an obligate carnivore. These solitary animals are fiercely territorial and hunt virtually any intruder smaller than them. Most prey are consumed in a single bite. However, for larger creatures it will sink its teeth and tusks into the prey and then roll its body through the water. This typically either tears a large portion off of the prey animal or drowns the specimen.

The behemoth generally floats near the surface of the water, leaving just its eyes, nose, and a few spinal ridges visible above the surface. When prey nears, it violently erupts from the water, grabbing the victim in its powerful jaws. A behemoth rarely actively hunts a prey animal and only hunts on land when desperate. Its form is ill-suited to rapid pursuit over land.

Behemoths are found in groups only during the late spring mating season. Males are drawn to females by their pheromones. The adults tolerate each other's company only long enough to breed. Immediately afterwards, the males leave, and the females lay the eggs in nests on dry land. These small clutches of eggs—never more than eight—are guarded by the mother for about three months, at which time they hatch. The newborn behemoths, which grow about 20 centimeters per month, stay with the mother until the following spring.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS Init IP
10 4 3 18 1 2 2 5 1 6 5 1

Movement: 15/45 (swimming)

Skills: Infiltration 3, Perception 2, Swimming 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Hardened Armor (10), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 14P, AP -2)

GHEDE FLY*Culex pestilans***Habitat:** Marshes, swamps, and other bodies of stagnant water**Range:** Africa, Europe, and India**Frequency:** Common**Identification:** These insects can grow up to 16 millimeters long and weigh 3 grams. Males possess serrated mandibles and a long, slender proboscis. Females use a hardened proboscis overlaid with chitin plates and ending in a chitinous needle to penetrate skin. Both have slender bodies, a pair of scaled wings, and long legs.**Habits:** The ghede fly is a nectar feeder, though in order to propagate the species the female must drink metahuman blood to supply the protein and iron necessary for her developing eggs.

The female hunts for metahuman blood through the odor of metahuman breath and sweat or by following a heat trail with the receptacles on either side of the proboscis. The needle is tough enough to penetrate troll skin. When the ghede bites a victim, it injects saliva. This saliva contains enzymes and proteins that prevent metahuman blood from clotting and that suppress the immune response. The ghede fly is a carrier for malaria (p. 132, *Augmentation*) and part of numerous parasitic lifecycles. These pathogens may be transported in the ghede fly's saliva. While it draws only about a gram of blood, it can significantly weaken the victim, suggesting that the ghede needs more than blood for its eggs.

The female ghede fly is persistent. It can fly for up to four hours non-stop, and it is adept enough to find gaps in armor or enter a secured building. A group of these flies can work together to confuse metahumans from being able to defend or even notice the female's attack.

Ghede flies deposit twenty to thirty eggs into stagnant water. The eggs pupate into larvae and grow into mature flies in a matter of weeks. The ghede fly is not affected by standard mosquito repellants.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
0	7	2	0	1	3	0	3	1	6	4	5	1

Movement: 5/8 (flight)**Skills:** Climbing 1, Flight 2, Infiltration 4, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 2**Powers:** Confusion, Darkness, Enhanced Senses (Smell, Thermographic Vision), Gestalt Consciousness, Immunity (Pathogens), Magic Sense, Search, Shadow Cloak, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 1P, AP 0), Wall Walking, Females Only: Pestilence (Malaria)**Weaknesses:** Females Only: Dietary Requirement (Metahuman Blood)**SHAMBLER***Globberogus Anableps***Habitat:** Swamps and sewers**Range:** Global**Frequency:** Rare**Identification:** A shambler is reptilian creature that stands up to 140 centimeters tall and weighs 150 kilograms. Its eyes are each actually split in half by a membrane, giving it the appearance of four eyes. It has a narrow head like an alligator but only vestigial teeth. It is light green in color. A shambler can stand on its hind legs like a bear but prefers quadruped movement. The shambler is covered by a distinctive shell of refuse and corpses like that of a hermit crab.**Habits:** The shambler has been difficult to classify, and it has been given its own family identification, *Globberogae* under the order *Squamata* (reptiles, amphibians, snakes). It has been observed in swamps and sewers, as it relies on a warm, humid atmosphere.

The shambler is an opportunistic hunter and scavenger. It lurks with most of its body submerged in dark and secluded places. The dual eyes are developed from a single optic nerve attached to two visual organs. One is optimized to compensate for water refraction, the other for air. This gives the shambler a complete view both above and below the water. Its vision becomes blurred when the shambler's head is completely under or out of the water.

The shambler is able to produce an extremely sticky substance from glands in its neck and chest cavity. It spits globs of this substance at prey, temporarily immobilizing them and sticking them to the ground and surrounding objects. The attack suffocates its victims.

The shambler then uses this glue to stick the corpse to its shell. This shell is used for protection and sustenance by the species. On the outside of this shell, the shambler grooms by coating it with secretions like shellac. Eventually, it hardens into a resinous glaze. Inside the shell, the shambler has long vein-like protrusions that release enzymes allowing them to burrow into the shell. These enzymes dissolve the flesh of its prey into a soup of nutrients that the shambler can absorb as food through the protrusions. Over time, the protrusions branch and grow into a fan-like pattern within the shell. Shamblers also grow upwards as the shell grows. To date, the largest shambler shell confirmed was 3 meters wide and nearly 500 kilograms.

The shambler reproduces with gemmules, a form of asexual reproduction in which a mass of cells from the shambler grows on the underside of the shell, feeding from it. This cellular mass eventually develops into a new shambler. Upon reaching maturity, the young detaches and begins forming its own shell.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	5	3	5	1	4	3	5	2	6	4	7	1

Movement: 5/10**Skills:** Exotic Ranged Weapon 4 (Glob Spit), Infiltration 3, Perception 3, Tracking 1, Unarmed Combat 1**Powers:** Binding, Engulf (Water), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Hardened Armor (6), Paralyzing Touch**Weaknesses:** Allergy (Sunlight, Severe)

Note: In order to use the Binding power at range, a shambler must first score at least one net hit with an Exotic Ranged Weapon attack. This requires a simple action to ready the binding attack and a second simple action to make the ranged weapon attack.



INCOMING FEED.....



STYMPHALIAN

Ardea foedus

Habitat: Wetlands and lakes

Range: Marshes of Spain, southern France, Italy, and Greece

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The stymphalian resembles a large heron that stands 280 centimeters tall and averages 8 kilograms in weight with a 370-centimeter wingspan. It has a tough rust-colored serrated beak. It also has grey plumage with brass-colored arrow feathers within its wings. Juvenile stymphalians have reddish-brown plumage. It has four-toed feet with retractable claws. The stymphalian's breath smells of rotting meat.

Habits: Stymphalians are the Awakened cousins of the purple heron (*Ardeidae purpurea*). They are carnivorous hunters. The species eats fish and frogs, but their main diet is small- and medium-sized mammals and reptiles that either live in the wetlands or come to the water to drink. Stymphalians live in social nesting groups of ten to twenty-five adults and form hunting groups of three to five members. These groups hunt by having one to two members flush prey towards the others.

The stymphalian has several brass-colored feathers which are calcified into a ridged state. When prey runs past, the stymphalian flaps its wings to release these ridged feathers like daggers. The arrow feathers regrow in less than a week and then calcify within hours of maturation. Once prey is wounded, the stymphalian pack will chase and kill the prey with their claws and beaks. The

stymphalian has a strong sense of smell and can follow a blood trail to fast prey. Sometimes a stymphalian swoops down on small prey like rabbits and fish. Its long neck and beak allows it to reach into brush and mud for prey.

Stymphalians rarely attack metahumans unless provoked. Metahumans who have been attacked report almost passing out due to the animal's breath.

These animals are very sensitive to sound, having a threshold of pain at around 100 decibels. They avoid motorways because of the noise.

Stymphalians build stick nests and can lay two to four pale red eggs. Incubation time is 25 days and young fledge in 3 months. Both parents care for the young by regurgitating partially digested meat for them to devour. There is intense rivalry among the young, and while they don't have their arrow feathers, the youngest siblings are typically killed or starved to death.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	4	3	2	2	4	2	4	2	6	4	7	1

Movement: 30/50 (flight)

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon (Arrow Feathers) 3, Flight 2, Infiltration 1, Perception 3, Running 1, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Improved Hearing, Smell), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0), Natural Ranged Weapon (Arrow Feather: DV 3P, AP 0), Noxious Breath

Weaknesses: Vulnerability (Sound)

Note: +1 Reach



There was only a sliver of a moon out as Traveler Jones and pilot Sherman P. Bradley flew out of Egypt and deeper into Africa. Jones looked out over the dark landscape, thinking about the job: pick up Mr. Barskey and whatever game he bagged, take it to a taxidermist, and sell the leftovers to a talismonger.

"10 minutes, TJ. Going silent," called Sherman over the commlink. Shortly, the background noise moved to a loud whisper.

Sherman arrived at the designated area near the Black Volta and sent out a short encrypted signal. The response came in the form of short-ranged AROs to light the way and provide navigational instructions, allowing him to land in near darkness. As Jones exited the plane, he found they had maneuvered under camouflage netting. Awaiting him was Mr. Barskey—the big game hunter himself—his assistant, and two hired security guards carrying automatic rifles. Behind them were camouflaged cargo containers, and beyond that were a few lights and tents.

"Jones, I had a good week," said Barskey as he approached. "I'd like to show you what I got before loading."

Jones followed Barskey and signaled Sherman to bring out the cargo drones.

"I've bagged three asonwu. They aren't in great shape. Nasty buggers swarmed the jeep. Have the taxidermists try to piece out at least one, though I'd prefer two. In this box I have a 5.2-meter-long ekyelebenle, and over here I have an anwuma bavoie who was following us, but the prize is this box." Opening it, he continued, "The Phoenix aureus. A lovely creature. I thought it was a trick of the setting sun at first." He closed it back up as the drone retrieved it for loading.

Abruptly, there was the boom of trees snapping. The guards looked anxious, but Barskey calmly said, "Andrew, do fetch me my rifle. Traveler Jones, I suspect this last creature will fill any remaining cargo space."

The cracking sounded closer. Andrew returned with an elephant gun as one of the guards drove a jeep over to Barskey.

"What it is?" asked Jones while Barskey mounted the jeep like a charioteer, resting the rifle on the roll bar.

"Don't know, but it will make a great conversation piece ..."

The mysterious creature finally burst from the jungle. It resembled an elephant, though it had a long, wide, prehensile jaw as if its trunk were transformed into a muzzle. Four long tusks splayed from its mouth. The beast entered the encampment and immediately began to fling and shred everything in sight. Jones saw a glint in Barskey's eye as the jeep sped forward towards the beast. Gunfire—both from Barskey and the panicked guards—echoed through the night.

The beast charged the jeep. Though the driver maneuvered well, it reached out and pulled a guard out of his seat with its prehensile maw.

"Crazy bastard! Sherman, get the plane ready to fly!" yelled Jones as he ran back to the plane.

"In case the beast wins," he thought to himself.



ON THE ORIGINS OF MUTANTS

A mutation is defined as a permanent change to the DNA sequence of a gene. Every living thing acquires mutations as it ages as the result of the environment (ultraviolet light, radiation, chemicals, etc.), but usually cells have a repair mechanism to fix damaged DNA. A mutation is further defined as a change that is not part of the normal variation of a given species. A mutagen causes the mutation and may be chemical, viral, etc.

The twentieth and early twenty-first centuries introduced a variety of chemicals and byproducts due to technological progress: carcinogens, estrogen mimics, synthetic pesticides, and persistent organic pollutants all can last many generations. Progress has created or proliferated mutations by changing the balance of nature. The eutrophication (excessive nutrients) of aquatic ecosystems from aggressive farming has tipped the balance, allowing an increase of infectious diseases and parasites. The result is the creation of six-legged frogs by the proliferation of the trematode parasite and pandemic chytrid fungus mutations in amphibians.

Since the turn of the century, the number of chemicals for medical and industrial use has more than doubled. Waste water treatment plants have been unable for decades to remove all the contaminants. Because of this continuous and persistent pollution, mutations, particularly inheritable germline mutations, appear more and more frequently. Mutations can be found anywhere in any species.

The destruction of nuclear plants and the use of nuclear devices have left radioactive hot spots around the world capable of hosting mutated species. Because of the Chicago Incident and others nuclear accidents, several governments have formed special divisions to be more proactive on radioactive issues. For example, the CAS and UCAS have formed the Toxic Containment Division (TCD) and Paranormal and Environmental Protection Division (PEPD), respectively. These groups are tasked to eradicate hostile species or contain hazards before they get out of control. They often post bounties and work with bounty hunters to complete these jobs. The Corporate Council has been petitioned to be harsher on environmental penalties and have more independent inspections, but there has been little headway.

When Halley's Comet passed in 2061, additional SURGE-like expressions appeared. While the media focused on metahumans affected by SURGE, there was also a panic over pets SURGEing; so much so that pet abandonment reached unprecedented levels for that year.

For game purposes, mutants include only instances that extend beyond minor aberrations. In general, the lifespan of a mutant is less than half that of their progenitor species. They also tend to be female because of estrogen-mimicking chemicals. Behaviorally, they may be very aggressive or completely inconsistent with the behavior of the progenitor species.

Awakened animals are not immune to changes in the environment. They can be subjected to the same mutagens, influenced by twisted magic, or fail to fully Awaken. When a paranormal critter is affected in this manner, they are referred to as toxic critters rather than mutants, in the same way mundane critters are distinguished from Awakened.

Toxic critters are considered more dangerous due to their influence and use of magical energies. Toxics are also more likely to become a new species than mutants, indicating a risk for an

invasive species that could dramatically affect an ecosystem. A prime example of this is the dakkaryne. There is one known exception to the toxic rule, which is the hellbender, as the whole species transformed into an Awakened form which needs a polluted environment.

CREATING A MUTANT

Mutants can be created by taking a Mundane critter (p. 86) and following the instructions below. A Mutant can have multiple features, but it may not reduce its Essence below 1.

For each of the listed changes, reduce its Essence by 1:

- For every two points added to attributes (up to 1.5 x the original attribute, round up)
- For each new skill added at rating 2
- For every two points added to skills
- For adding a quality or per level of quality (see the list of qualities below)
- For each metagenetic trait (Metagenetic Qualities, p. 110, *Runner's Companion*)

Reduce its Intuition by 1 for every 2 points of Essence lost this way (to a minimum of 1). Note that increases in Body correlate to increased Mutant size. Note also that an attribute of 0 may be raised to 1.

Qualities

Mutants can offset the Essence cost of up to three Positive qualities (or levels) with three Negative qualities (or levels). Mutants can have any of the following qualities:

Positive Qualities

- Adrenaline Surge
- Catlike
- Guts
- High Pain Tolerance
- Lightning Reflexes
- Natural Immunity
- Night Vision
- Quick Healer
- Resistance to Pathogens/Toxins
- Tough as Nails
- Toughness
- Water Sprite

Negative Qualities

- Albinism
- Asthma
- Low Pain Tolerance
- Night Blindness
- Reduced (Sense)
- Sensitive System
- Uncontrolled Metastasis
- Weak Immune System

James wants to make life harder for his player characters when they are trying to sneak through the woods towards a research facility. So he decides to create a bear

EXAMPLE PHYSICAL MUTATIONS

- Mange-like appearance, albinism, open sores, lumps, lesions, bone misalignment
- Bloodshot eyes, cataracts
- Vestigial extra parts or missing parts
- Metagenetic traits
- A size change ranging from 50–200 percent of a standard specimen

that's been mutated by chemical waste leaking into a nearby stream. James selects a grizzly bear (p. 92) for the base stats and skills. He then decides to increase its Strength (1 point of Essence) to make it more of a threat and assigns the Toughness (1) quality (1 point of Essence) so it's more durable. James could have increased Body, which would naturally have increased its Condition Monitor, but then the bear might have been too severe a threat. James also chooses to give it the Metagenetic quality (1 point of Essence) Defensive Secretions. At 3 points of Essence loss, the bear's Intuition is lowered by 1 point.

For flavor, James decides the bear is hairless with sickly red, wet skin and gives it an appropriate name: flesh walker. The bear now looks like this:

FLESH WALKER

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
9	4	4	11	3	2	2	3	0	3	7	1

Frequency: Rare

Movement: 15/45

Skills: Climbing 2, Intimidation 2, Perception 3, Running 2, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 5P, AP 0)

Qualities: Defensive Secretions, Toughness (1)

As the runners tromp through the woods in the middle of the night, they stumble upon what looks like a skinned bear. Suddenly, it stands up on its hind legs and growls menacingly.

SAMPLE MUTANT CRITTERS

BLOOD DOG

Habitat: Barrens and wastelands

Range: The UCAS from Norfolk to New Orleans

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The blood dog is a mutated dog. It is almost hairless, with scabby skin and a few tufts of coarse hair on its ears, nape, and back. Its head has an upturned muzzle with large protruding fangs and black lips. Its eyes are bloodshot and swollen. Size and hair color varies with the infected breed or species.

Habits: Originally labeled as a chupacabra, the blood dog has been classified as a chemically induced mutation. It doesn't eat the meat of its prey, surviving instead by drinking blood—hence the chupacabra misnomer. Necropsies performed on blood dogs have identified them as mutated wolves, coyotes, or dogs with similar skin and digestive system mutations. The fangs are

grooved to allow drinking blood. An ulcerated stomach identifies the possible vector of the metagenic toxin as well as how it continues to move from the original source. The blood dog does have a limited lifespan, as most can't get enough nourishment. This makes them dangerous risk takers, as they are constantly hungry. The perpetuation of the blood dog mutation may be due to other canine species consuming a blood dog's remains. The mutation has not been observed to pass to non-canines. The blood dog has been seen primarily in eastern North America, from Norfolk to New Orleans.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	3	3	3	2	1	3	0	4	5	1

Movement: 20/45

Skills: Perception 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Modifier: Reach –1

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Fragile 1, Natural Weapon (Fangs: DV 2P, AP 0, –1 Reach)

Qualities: Adrenaline Surge, Celerity, Fangs

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Blood)

Similar Animals: **Blood Dog** (Wolf Variant): Strength 4, Intimidation 2, Unarmed Combat 4, Natural Weapon (Fangs: DV 3P, AP 0, –1 Reach)

CHALICO

Chalicotherium goldfussi

Habitat: Savannas and grasslands

Range: Africa, parts of Asia (India and China), and as far north as Greece and Hungary

Frequency: Extremely Rare

Identification: The chalico is an equine mutation. It is almost 3 meters tall, weighing 300 kilograms. It has a horse-like head with an ox-like neck on a gorilla-like body and the forepaws of an anteater. Its rear feet end in three-toed hooves. Colors vary from solid browns and yellows to black with white stripes or spots.

Habits: While it has been given a scientific name since its description matches a prehistoric animal, the chalico has not been confirmed as an inheritable mutation. The chalico is a partially Awakened horse, zebra, or mule. This unusual mutant is an herbivore that can graze like a horse but also dig with its claws to pull up roots and tubers or reach up to pull down fruit or branches. It moves like a gorilla, walking on its knuckles. It is slow and methodical in its grazing. Since most fear that its meat is unsafe and it provides no useful teslasma, chalicoes are generally left alone.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
8	5	5	7	3	2	1	2	0	4	7	1

Movement: 15/35

Skills: Perception 2, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Natural Weapon (Claws: DV 4P, AP 0, +1 Reach)

Qualities: Claws, Elongated Limbs

HELLCOW

Bos malus

Habitat: Any grazing or cattle farming community

Range: Global since 2061

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The hellcow's appearance is that of a scaled beast with a huge mouth. Its teeth are conical but not as sharp as a



INCOMING FEED.....

carnivore's. It breaks down food with its very acidic saliva. Its hooves end in curved claws.

Habits: The *Bos malus*, otherwise known as the hellcow, is triggered by ingestion of a prion. While mad cow disease, also caused by a prion, attacks the brain of the subject, this mutation causes the bovine's offspring to express the hellcow phenotype. Tests to detect the prion are limited and extremely costly. Corporate Court regulations forbid the sale or shipment of untested cows to prevent further outbreaks. In India, however, a sacred herd of hellcows—considered to be a divine omen from Lord Krishna—is maintained on a government-secured pasture behind a high-security wall.

The hellcow is a voracious omnivore. It attempts to eat anything—wood, metal, metahumans, its own mother, etc. Gestation for a hellcow is about seven months, or seventy-five percent that of a normal calf.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
10	3	3	8	1	1	1	1	0	2	4	1

Movement: 15/30

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon 2, Perception 2, Running 2, Unarmed Combat 4

Qualities: Corrosive Spit, Dragon Hide, Ogre Stomach

Weaknesses: Reduced Senses (Smell, Complete)

LAB RAT

Habitat: Any human settled area, both rural and urban environments

Range: Global

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: Lab rats appear similar to normal rodents.

Habits: Lab rats are a catchall for several mutations of rodents that have been identified. Vermin are notorious for sneaking into secure places and eating virtually anything; unfortunately some places and some chemicals can cause mutations. There are three that are seen most often: the stink rat, the spider rat, and the phoe rat. The stink rat, like a normal rat, defecates as it moves. Its urine has a strong, skunk-like smell. The spider rat uses its change to its advantage, defying exterminators by moving along vertical surfaces. If seen, the phoe rat is mistaken for a devil or demon rat, as it gives off a nasty vibe. The behavior of lab rats does not differ from normal rats.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
0	3	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	5	3	1

Movement: 5/15

Skills: Climbing 2, Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Unarmed Combat 1

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Gestalt Consciousness

Quality: Scent Gland

Note: -1 Reach

Similar Animals:

Spider Rat: replace Scent Gland with Wall Walking

Phoe Rat: replace Scent Gland with Nasty Vibe, Intimidation 2, Essence 4

NEOGARGOYLE

Habitat: Skyraiders and other tall buildings

Range: Global

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The neogargoyle is a mutant bat averaging 250 centimeters tall with grey, crusty skin and weighing around 2 kilograms. Its front digits are elongated to almost a third of its body length, and they end in sharp claws.

Habits: The neogargoyle—originally identified as a subspecies of gargoyle—has been correctly identified as a common bat that has reacted to the plascrete treatment used on skyraiders. The roosting bat's skin has calcified from leaching chemicals, and they have lost their abilities to fly and see. They used to roost among the skyraiders. Without flight, they turn to the building itself, tapping and beating on cracks and vents to find food and water. Unfortunately for tenants and neogargoyles, they end up breaking pipes and chewing cables. Neogargoyles have been found in damaged ventilation fans and have fallen to the ground below. Their dermal deposits make them extremely durable. They are hard to exterminate before they damage buildings. Once a bat begins to transform, it has a lifespan of 5–7 months before calcification completely immobilizes it.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	Init	IP
1	3	2	1	1	3	3	3	0	4	6	1

Movement: 20/40

Skills: Climbing 2, Perception 3, Unarmed Combat 4

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Echolocation), Fragile 3, Gestalt Consciousness

Qualities: Dermal Alteration (Granite Skin)

Weaknesses: Reduced Senses (Sight)

Notes: Loss of flight is considered a Negative quality

CREATING A TOXIC CRITTER

To create a toxic critter from an existing paranormal critter, the GM must choose its primary and secondary toxic powers. To create a new toxic critter from a normal critter, use both the mutant and toxic rules in its creation. Unlike mutations, the warping effects of toxic powers do not further reduce the toxic critter's Essence.

Toxic critters may be assigned up to two additional powers by also assigning a weakness in exchange for each power.

If the toxic power selected is Mutagen, then the GM can choose to give it a mutagenic trait.

The flesh walker was fun, but James feels that the runners need a little more excitement in their lives. To push the envelope, he decides to have a toxic horned bear (p. 136) held at the lab while the scientists fill out paperwork on it.

James chooses Fear as its primary power and Taint as its secondary power, reasoning that its aura was twisted enough to affect its surroundings. For flavor, he adds that the horns on this bear are spiky and crooked like odd-looking antlers and that its eyes glow red with anger. Finally, James names the creature a wild demon bear.

TOXIC POWERS

Anaphylaxis	208
Animal Control	208
Binding	209
Confusion	209
Corrosive Spit	209
Corrosive Secretion	209
Devouring	209
Elemental Attack (Radiation)	210
Energy Aura (Radiation)	210
Engulf (Sludge)	210
Enhanced Senses	204
Essence Drain	211
Fear	212
Immunity (Toxin/Pathogens)	212
Magic Sense	213
Mutagen	213
Noxious Breath	214
Pestilence	206
Taint	215
Venom	208



WILD DEMON BEAR

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
13	6	4	13	1	4	4	5	2	6	5	8	2

Movement: 25/45

Skills: Astral Combat 4, Climbing 2, Intimidation 4, Perception 3, Running 2, Tracking 3, Unarmed Combat 5

Powers: Armor (4/6), Dual Natured, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Fear, Natural Weapon (Claws/Bite: DV 7P, AP 0), Taint

Notes: +2 Reach

The runners successfully infiltrated the lab and were quietly going down the hall when they heard screams of panic. Suddenly, the body of a scientist was hurled into the hall, where it crashed with a wet crunching sound. Moments later, a deformed horned bear followed it out. The creature turned and faced the runners as they felt its menacing presence.

SAMPLE TOXIC CRITTERS

BORAX BURRO

Equus asinus magnus

Habitat: Arid desert regions

Range: Mojave and Colorado Deserts and Northern Africa

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: Similar in appearance to the wild burro (*Equus asinus*), the borax burro stands 1.5 meters in height at the shoulder and weighs around 150 kilograms. It has a short bristly mane, a tail that ends in a bushy tassel, and long ears. Colors vary from white to grey to brown, and patterns vary with irregularly shaped spots.

Habits: The borax burro is a shy herbivore that moves in families of between two and six adults. It can tolerate long periods without

water and eat a variety of vegetation. It has corrosive saliva based off of boric acid, allowing it to break down even unconventional materials for food. While it was found in North America and Africa, it is supposedly named for the borax mines that used burros for labor. It lives in arid regions such as mountain slopes. The borax burro is considered a toxic critter, as it helps in the desertification of land by devouring all that is available and leaving an acidic residue behind to deter growth.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS Init IP
6 5 5 7 3 2 1 2 0 4 8 1

Movement: 20/80

Skills: Athletics skill group, Exotic Ranged Weapon 2, Perception 2, Running 3, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Corrosive Saliva, Devouring, Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0)

DAKKARYNE

Lutra ederis

Habitat: Polluted marshes and rivers

Range: Europe

Frequency: Uncommon

Identification: The dakkaryne looks like an otter, but instead of a clean, shiny, brown fur coat, its rough black coat has an iridescent sheen. Its beady black eyes have a menacing appearance. Dakkaryne grow up to a meter in length and weigh an average of 10 kilograms. It's a very vocal species that communicates with grunts, squeaks, and growls.

Habits: The dakkaryne is the toxic creation of the common European otter (*Lutra lutra*). Unlike most Awakened species, the dakkaryne's origins are well documented. In 2045, in an effort to repopulate wild otters, geneticists bred and manipulated the captive species to be more tolerant of pollution and disease. A year later, they were released in northern Europe. In June 2047, the first dakkaryne was found in Scotland. This was followed by similar discoveries in Norway.

Dakkaryne are very aggressive toward all other creatures, including metahumans. Survivors report that the dakkaryne would stalk and hunt for sport. With corrosive secretions and aggressive natures, dakkaryne are considered a menace, corroding structures and killing metahumans.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
1 2 2 0 1 2 2 1 1 6 6 8 1

Movement: 10/30 (swimming)

Skills: Infiltration 2, Perception 2, Swimming 2, Tracking 2, Unarmed Combat 2

Powers: Corrosive Secretion, Engulf (Sludge), Immunity (Pathogens, Toxins), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 2P, AP 0)

Weaknesses: Dietary Requirement (Dioxins, trace only), Fragile 1

Notes: -1 Reach

GAMMA SPIDER

Solifugae currita

Habitat: Deserts and arid regions

Range: North America, Australia, and the Middle East

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The camel spider is an arachnid, but not a true spider. It has six hairy legs, two long sense organs that end in sticky pads for catching flying birds and climbing, and large powerful pincers. The gamma spider is a toxic variant that can reach a length of 50 centimeters and a weight of 500 grams. Gamma spiders are nocturnal, and they seek shade during the day. They are also aggressive carnivores.

Habits: The gamma spider is theorized to have some connections to both radiation and magic. This theory is supported by the locations of their habitats—always in radioactive wastes. They hunt birds and lizards nearly twice their size and can occasionally swarm larger animals such as camels if food or water is scarce. Gamma spiders are not afraid of metahumans, and they will attempt to scare them out of their territory before attacking. During the day, the gamma spider remains a danger; although it hides in the shade, it still gives off enough radiation to make metahumans sick. The only creatures that seem to intimidate these arachnids are Nova Scorpions.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
0 1 3 0 1 2 0 1 0 6 6 5 1

Movement: 2/5

Skills: Dodge 3, Infiltration 3, Perception 2

Powers: Elemental Attack (Radiation), Energy Aura (Radiation), Gestalt Consciousness, Wall Walking

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sun, Moderate)

Notes: -1 Reach

SEA LEECH

Californidae Sangrachimera

Habitat: Marshy wetlands and coastal shallows

Range: From the San Francisco Bay to as far south as San Diego; the waters off South Africa

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The sea leech is a monstrosity with a worm-like body averaging 3 meters wide and 10 meters long. Beyond that, no two sea leeches look alike. They can have all manner of tentacles, fins, legs, arms, and other appendages or none at all. They also can have from one to ten mouths. Coloration ranges from grey to green to brown.

Habits: The sea leech seeks prey in the water and uses its muscular mouth to suck the blood from a victim. This animal will prey on anything that bleeds, including metahumans. It may use confusion on prey, disorienting a victim so that it will drown while attempting to surface. Sea leeches rarely breach the surface of the water.

The sea leech is hermaphroditic and lays up to a dozen eggs (spheres up to one-third meter in diameter) in sediment. Sea leech offspring are about a meter in length at hatching, and they attack smaller prey such as fish and seagoing birds.

Parazoologists have concluded that regardless of origin, the sea leech has evolved into a novel toxic species.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
5 3 2 8 1 3 4 3 0 6 4 5 1

Movement: 15/25 (swimming)



INCOMING FEED.....

Skills: Escape Artist 3, Perception 3, Swimming 4, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Confusion, Enhanced Senses (Thermal, Touch), Essence Drain (Blood), Gills, Mutagen

Weaknesses: Allergy (Fire, Moderate), Reduced Senses (Vision)

Note: +3 Reach

TWISTED STYMPHALIAN

Ardea foeduspox

Habitat: Landfills and coastal areas

Range: Greece and other areas around the Mediterranean

Frequency: Rare

Identification: The twisted stymphalian is differentiated from a normal stymphalian (p. 158) by its bald head, which is tinged with a dark red color.

Habits: Twisted stymphalians are the corrupted version of the stymphalian. These most likely came about due to a series of chemical spills in some of their native wetlands in 2047. The twisted stymphalian is a scavenger that migrates near sewage spills and landfills. It incubates a variety of nasty bacteria and viruses that it picks up from feeding. After digestion, its droppings release a host of pathogens.

These birds constitute a health hazard to populated areas, as they can quickly spread any number of plagues. Even after death, the twisted stymphalian is toxic and will bloat quickly as bacteria feed on the corpse. Those that touch a twisted stymphalian without protection often enter anaphylactic shock. Greek authorities kill and burn these birds on sight.

The twisted stymphalian doesn't use its arrow feathers to hunt; rather, they are used to fend off creatures that provoke them.

The arrow feathers are even more dangerous, as they usually carry a variety of pathogens.

Twisted stymphalians create nests of two to four eggs in landfills, using the heat from decomposition to incubate them. A week after hatching, offspring will leave the nest to forage through the landfill.

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
3	4	3	2	2	4	2	4	0	6	4	7	1

Movement: 30/50 (flight)

Skills: Exotic Ranged Weapon 3, Flight 2, Infiltration 1, Perception 3, Running 1, Unarmed Combat 3

Powers: Anaphylaxis, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Natural Weapon (Bite: DV 3P, AP 0, +1 Reach), Natural Ranged Weapon (Arrow Feather: DV 3P, AP 0), Noxious Breath, Pestilence

Weaknesses: Reduced Senses (Hearing), Allergy (Clean Water, Mild)

TWISTED STYMPHALIAN PESTILENCE

Vector: Contact

Speed: 4 hours

Penetration: 0

Power: 10

Effect: Disorientation, Physical Damage

Stymphalian pestilence is actually made up of a variety of dangerous diseases that cause bleeding, open sores, and skin discoloration. Both the offal and arrow feathers carry the pathogens.

MUTANT AND TOXIC CRITTERS



Sirens blared behind Ma'fan as she dropped ten feet from the fire escape base to the ground. The target—a lovely opal with an astral presence that gleamed like a beacon—had a far better electronic alarm system than she'd been led to believe.

As she took off down the alley, she mentally retraced her steps. The wards hadn't been a problem; she'd used a few tricks to easily bypass them. The watcher spirits were easy to avoid; the magician who'd assigned their patrol routes left holes that gave her plenty of opportunity to sneak in, get the gem, and sneak back out without alerting them.

The electronic security that her legwork had turned up hadn't been a problem. The site had no security cameras, save for a few drones that gave her little to fear; their patrol routes had given her plenty of time to avoid them as well. The maglocks were primitive and easily bypassed.

The problem was the security on the display case. She picked the simple mechanical lock in seconds, but the pressure sensor didn't cooperate when she attempted to bypass it.

When she'd reached for the electronics, she'd have sworn that she heard the sound of mischievous laughter. A quick glance had revealed what she'd already known—there was no one around in the physical or the astral. But when she touched the wiring, security alarms blared, and high-pitched laughter reverberated around her once more. She'd done the only reasonable thing: grab the gem from the already open case and hightail it down the fire escape. All the way out of the penthouse, the laughter followed.

As she looked for her pre-planned escape routes, a helicopter hovered over the streets behind her. The laughter had stopped, though she still grimaced at its memory. Her best bet now was distasteful, to say the least, as her backup plan called for a trip through the sewers.

Jumping down a manhole, she hit the sludge running. Her gut instinct told her that she must have drawn the attention of a free spirit. She made a mental note to get in touch with a magician friend.. If she wanted to get things back on track, she was going to need some professional help.



ON THE NATURE OF SPIRITS

Posted by Ethernaut

Through my education and professional career, I've travelled through the deep astral, investigated the basis of many legends, and performed fairly extensive surveys of spirit manifestations. I need to start off with an important caveat: there remain surprises around every corner when it comes to magical research. We know less than we think we know about the nature of magic, astral space, spirits, and the metaplanes—and we really don't think we know that much.

Yet, there's one important point that I need to get across to mundane and magicians everywhere: spirits are bastards. Some of them may seem helpful. Sometimes, they may actually be helpful, especially if they are bound or owe a service. Free spirits, on the other hand, are always working an angle, and it's seldom one that's mutually beneficial.

- I'd suggest that you had a string of bad encounters just prior to writing this. Your tone here is downright paranoid. Spirits can cooperate and be relied upon. Even with free spirits, it's just a matter of taking the necessary precautions. I'd never suggest taking this extreme of a viewpoint.

- Axis Mundi

- Oh, that must be it. I've just been dealing with the naughty ones.
- Ethernaut

- Or it could just be that they don't like your conservative hermeticism.

- Axis Mundi

It's almost physically impossible for a metahuman mind to truly appreciate the motivations of a spirit. Metahumans are limited by our neurochemistry and the environmental pressures that led to our evolution. The basis for a spirit's mind is entirely subject to conjecture, divorced as it is from any physical existence. Further, it's entirely possible that the basis may vary based upon the metaplane from which the spirit was summoned. As different magical traditions, and sometimes even mages of the same tradition, summon spirits from different metaplanes, there are far too many variables to even attempt to address this question.

- This suggests an interesting parallel between free spirits and metasapient AIs. It leaves me with an itch to dig into some neurochemistry texts and compare a few AI personality profiles.

- Smiling Bandit

- I suspect there is a parallel. Less so with sprites than with AIs, but even they can get pretty "out there."

- Netcat

THE FEY

Mythology and fairy tales are notoriously imprecise and inconsistent with their nomenclature. Countless references to elves and dwarves are completely at odds with our modern use of those terms. While part of that can be attributed to modern

interpretations, a large part may be due to the age and oral nature of these stories. As the stories were passed down across multiple generations, some names were interchanged, and some legends misattributed. This has led to some of the confusion that is experienced today. Of course, there isn't definitive evidence that the names we use today for various Awakened species are the same that were intended at the time these myths originated.

Sometimes, the nomenclature in folk tales may be questioned. The Brothers Grimm are noted as having had a propensity to change names in their adaptations for the sake of consistency. It's perfectly reasonable to assume that other compilers made similar changes. So it's best to look for commonalities in actions and abilities between observed paranormal creatures appearing in classic folk tales, rather than try to identify the names that are shared. Once these features have been identified, it becomes much easier to attempt to assign a name and a pattern of activity to the creatures.

Many modern retellings of classic folktales have been modified from the original with happier endings and politically correct portrayals of some of the races depicted. To overcome this, it's essential to go back to the earliest sources. In many cases, it's vital to also view these tales in their original language, as translations may detract from a story's true intent.

- You don't even have to go all the way back to moldy hard copy. Just tracing the changes in electronic editions in books of nursery rhymes since the '20s is pretty amazing.

- Snopes

Beyond the legends, some spirits can be classified as creatures of faerie. In general, these classifications are based on their innate abilities, which seem to go beyond what is available to more traditional spirits. In particular, this includes vanishing, which is the ability to instantly transport themselves, seemingly physically, to the metaplanes without leaving a trace. Spirits may also manipulate their victims' minds with glamour, an overwhelming, full-sensory illusion that does not affect technology but tends to make its viewers ignore the output of any technology.

- The Seelie and Unseelie courts of Tír na nÓg are the most organized communities of faerie. Fey support for both is also the surest sign of division within faerie culture, if such a thing exists. They perceive the world very differently from us, beginning with their perception of time but including their ideas of value and in many ways existence. Never accept a gift from a faerie or offer thanks or apologies to one. Any of these actions can lead to unpleasant consequences.

- Axis Mundi

The reasons for faerie involvement with the physical world are unknown, but their integral presence (and accurate description) in folk tales prove that they have engaged in relationships with both magicians and mundanes. Their presence may be due to curiosity, apparent generosity, or sport.

These meddlers have established a historic global presence, from the domovoi of Eastern Europe to the kokopelli of North America and the cicak of Oceania. Though they all clearly yearn to meddle in human and metahuman affairs, they may conspire

PARANORMAL CREATURE OR SPIRIT?

Many of the creatures that can be classified as faeries, particularly those with the abilities of glamour and vanishing, continue to have unclear phylogenetic classifications. In some cases, these classifications have been in dispute for over sixty years.

Invariably, a magician classifies these creatures as spirits. Similarly, a biologist looks at the creatures as paranormal animals. The quandary arises when a paranaturalist examines them. Objectivity goes out the window. Paranaturalists usually see the entities as spirits or paranormal animals, depending on whether they are trained primarily as magicians or as biologists.

However, in a small but growing number of cases, some paranaturalists posit a new classification. They suggest that the entities in question are a bizarre blend of spirit and animal—a creature that is not native to the physical realm but capable of recreating a physical body in the physical world. This theory conveniently satisfies the disparate characteristics, but it contradicts most established theories of astral space and the metaplanes.

It's unlikely that this dispute will be resolved any time soon.

in grander ways than suspected. I've heard tell of faeries hiring shadowrunners for political assignments. From simple assassinations to complex series of robberies, faeries may be planning to seize control from us.

The Wild Hunt

One significant malevolent force from folk tales must be considered—the Huntsman and his Wild Hunt. Legends of this aggregation of spirits feature prominently in the myths of central, western, and northern Europe and related tales in many other cultures. In all cases, the Huntsman and his companions prowl in archaic hunting regalia, accompanied by their hounds. The sounds of their horns blaring, their horses thundering, and their hounds baying struck fear into the hearts of all those who heard them. In some stories, these entities flew through the skies, accompanied by thunderstorms, and compelling the spirits of others—both dead and alive—to join their hunts. In other stories, the spirits were earthbound but equally single-minded in pursuit of their prey.

The Wild Hunt isn't necessarily malevolent in the legends. Though its appearance often presaged a disaster, it sometimes appeared to contain a catastrophe or defend its worshipers. However, the Wild Hunt always extracted a great cost. Even when it helped defend a land, many of that land's people were called to forever join with the Hunt in the process.

Modern manifestations of these spirits are remarkably consistent with the myths. They are always led by the Huntsman—usually a powerful guardian spirit. The Huntsman rides a powerful steed with glowing red eyes which is generally a spirit of beasts. The hounds, also beast spirits, are always in the Huntsman's company. Air spirits may propel the Hunt through the sky, often manifesting as other hunters.

Seeing the Hunt in action is, by all accounts, absolutely terrifying.

- That's the understatement of the month. I've seen combat-hardened mercs shit themselves when the Wild Hunt turned up. Can't tell you what happened next, I stopped looking and ran. The Wild Hunt is something for the spelljockeys to deal with.
- Black Mamba

Many subjected to the sight are psychologically damaged, generally exhibiting all the characteristics of post-traumatic stress disorder. While this may in part be due to particular manifestations of the spirits' glamour, it is inarguably an overwhelming force. Fear is an inarguably rational response to an entity of this potency and malevolence. In contrast to the myth, there are no recorded instances of metahumans being compelled to join the Hunt. These spirits are in all probability not capable of possession, nor are they adept at the more subtle mental manipulations involved in compelling a metahuman's actions.

GHOSTS

There are few spirits more controversial, especially among mundanes, than the entities lumped together as ghosts. Most magicians believe that these malicious beings are nothing more than wild Spirits of Man. However, most mundanes feel that these things are tied to the souls of metahumans who have died. Legally, neither side has a leg to stand on in most countries, though there are a few backwaters where ghost testimonies are admissible in court. Psychologically, these spirits often have inexplicable levels of information about the lives of the deceased—though even those who ascribe to the beliefs in their metahuman origins admit that ghosts can lie. Metaphysically, no ghost I've ever assensed bore any resemblance to the astral form of the person I knew that was supposedly associated with it.

However, the common magical principle that belief dictates form consistently rationalizes the ghost's anger, connection to a location, and level of insight.

- Not even a majority of magicians ascribe to that principle.
- Lyrn
- Nor should they.
- Man-of-Many-Names

Ultimately, their origins and their information are not all that important. What's important is that these entities are malevolent fuckers who like nothing more than killing metahumans. If you see a translucent person that glows with an inner light standing in a darkened alley, avoid it. If you can't avoid it, try to banish or kill it. Don't try to talk to it, don't waste time feeling sorry for it, and don't

waste your time trying to solve its problem to send it to the afterlife.

- Some Awakened make decent bucks specializing in eliminating these things as exorcists. Find a professional and subcontract.
- Haze
- Ethernaut's oversimplifying things. Not every ghost is malicious. Some just seek to be put to rest.
- Axis Mundi

Ghosts hate metahumans. The origins of that hatred are often tied to a domain where a violent act took place. Sometimes, they're tied not to a location but to an object called a chain. Domains for ghosts are just like any other spirit—they're more powerful in their domain, and everyone else there is in deep metaphysical danger. Chains grant ghosts an added level of invulnerability—until its chain is destroyed, disposing of a ghost is nearly impossible. If you can't just ignore a ghost, it's critical that you try to find its chain before you try to eliminate it.

Some ghosts seem aware of their surroundings, while others seem trapped in a vision of a long-forgotten event. The former can often be more dangerous. Their awareness means that they may be much more deceptive. However, that's not to say that there's a power level difference between these two types. A ghost that seems trapped to reenact an event may be overwhelmingly powerful and angry if its reenactment is interrupted.

HARBINGERS

Harbingers are capricious wild spirits that bear the taint of physical or emotional corruption. Some are clearly linked to metahuman acts—irresponsible blood magic, wanton slaughter, or boundless cruelty—though others seem little more than metaphysical manifestations of vice. They're distinguished from toxic spirits in that there need not be any actual pollution present. Rather, their forms are seething incarnations of hatred, cruelty, and other malevolent thoughts and acts.

- Mercifully, my experience with these spirits is limited, and I'm led to believe that they are uncommon. Having said that, I'd always suggest having a magician assent any teammate that seems to be acting completely out of character. Even if it isn't one of these forces, it's possible that an easily dispelled bit of sorcery could be behind the action.
- Winterhawk

These vile spirits seem to exist for the sole purpose of spreading their corruption. Violence is not their only tactic, and they're not always directly confrontational. Many exist solely to seduce their victims down dark paths—often paths that lead to the creation or manifestation of other harbingers. Their emotional manipulation can lead sapient and even animals to commit acts that are completely out of character, including senseless cruelty, rape, murder, and even cannibalism.

Harbingers are predators who feed upon their victim's life energy. They often use their manipulative talents to generate intense emotional responses. These emotional responses can trigger a veritable feeding frenzy in a harbinger.

Some harbingers are possession spirits that use their abilities to control a person or animal into promulgating their agendas. Others rely upon mental manipulation magic or sheer cunning. Many are adept at Masking, and they may take a metahuman form to add a level of believability to their approach. In most of these cases, it can be extraordinarily difficult for a mundane to even realize that they have been affected by a harbinger.

IMPS

The spirits identified as imps are exceptionally rare. In fact, if it weren't for the malevolence that they exhibit, I'd completely ignore them in this article. However, they are sufficiently dangerous that I'd be remiss to omit them. Imps are characterized by their ability to manipulate the functions of enchanted items, particularly foci.

- I've encountered two imps. They came from talismans that originated on opposite sides of the globe, and I was never able to track down any association in the telesma involved in their production. I don't know what allows these beings to cross over from the meta-planes, but I've become much more careful about selecting foci ever since I heard of them.
- Jimmy No

Imps are adept at Masking and rely upon possession. Their possession of foci makes imps a specific danger to the Awakened. Many imps go undetected until after a magician has already bound a focus. In this manner, a focus can travel from enchanter to talismonger to practicing magician without any of them realizing the risks involved. In a few anecdotal cases, imps have also been found in association with items uncovered in archeological digs, though it seems improbable that they would have stayed in possession of these items from the time of their loss through to their rediscovery.

Beyond their Masking, there is little consistency in the astral form of an imp. Some have been recorded as heavily tentacled shapes intertwined with the focus they possess. Others take on a humanoid or animal shape. Regardless of the form, their auras are intricately linked to their focus, far more so than would be usually expected of a possession spirit with its vessel. Attempts at communication with these imps, at least by Awakened who are not tied to them by a spirit pact, always fail.

The focus gains the usual benefits of possession. It becomes far sturdier, and it seems to slough off dirt and other signs of wear and tear. In addition, it becomes far more appealing, which is anecdotally confirmed by the speed with which these possessed foci usually sell for the talismongers that unwittingly provide them.

The problems begin once an Awakened chooses to bond a possessed focus. At this stage, the imp intervenes and forges a spirit pact as part of the binding. Due to the rarity of these spirits, most novices don't notice the aberration. The binding process feels different from previous bindings but not enough to alert most Awakened.

It's at this point that things start to turn ugly. The imp begins to use the magic of its pact to drain life energy from the Awakened. Initially, the drain will be subtle—the victim will feel uncharacteristically fatigued and may lose interest in activities that do not



INCOMING FEED.....



use the focus. In cases where the victim resists these feelings, the difficulties will increase. Many such victims begin to suffer accidents, triggering a constant state of paranoia and dread—again, intensified through the use of glamour and mental manipulations.

Use of the focus and payment of life energy through the pact often assuages the imp. Suddenly, life is wonderful again, until the temperamental imp becomes hungrier. This can quickly lead to a vicious cycle of mood swings, low energy, and insomnia. In some cases, the Awakened victim may be forced into psychiatric treatment by friends or employers. Of course, such treatments will fail unless they involve complete isolation from the now favored focus for an extended period of time.

- After you see one magician go through this cycle, it's obvious when it happens to another. Watch for a magician who seems to alternate between astounding levels of power and exhaustion. I think the imps manage to force their victims to overextend themselves.
- Lyran

I've been unable to identify a good way to effectively overcome the influence of an imp. Clearly, if another Awakened bonds the possessed focus, the imp will turn its attention to a new subject. However, this hardly solves the problem. Attempts at banishment have had limited success—these spirits are remarkably resistant to it. Destroying a possessed focus is also extraordinarily difficult due to the level of power that these entities have generally achieved by the time they're discovered.

- I've never heard of a successful attempt to banish an imp without destroying the affiliated focus. If you've got records of one, I'd love a link.

• Jimmy No

With that in mind, preventative measures seem to be the most effective defense. Make certain to thoroughly assense any focus before binding it, or have a magician talented at Masking screen it for you. In cases where the focus seems too good to pass up, consider having a second magician scan it, just in case. Finally, after bonding a particularly effective focus, consider having your own aura assensed for any signs of infection. As always, keep in mind that if something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

PRIMORDIAL SPIRITS

Of all of the spirits I've mentioned, primordial ones are the least malevolent but the most unknowable. A primordial spirit is a purely natural entity. These forms manifest in locations that have been largely untouched by metahumanity. Their true nature is consistent with the nature of their environment. When the Awakening occurred, primordial spirits appeared spontaneously as metaphysical manifestations of these places.

The best known primordial spirits are from places where metahumans are intruders, for these are places where they are most likely to manifest. The Silap Inua of the polar regions and the Man-of-the-woods are the best-known examples of this spirit type. Metahumanity has never fully exploited the poles, and those untouched regions have remained undisturbed, allowing these

entities to still hold sway. Similarly, the deepest forests, the darkest caves, and likely the depths of the oceans are all parts of the manosphere and ecosphere where metahumanity cannot easily venture. As these locations have remained undisturbed, spirits have surfaced to protect them.

- They've done a good job of it, too. Locations guarded by primordial spirits tend to remain pristine and often expand. Persuading a primordial spirit of your goodwill is as simple as giving the appropriate offering and being sincere with it.
- Axis Mundi

While it's impossible to understand how their minds work, it's clear that these entities are focused on protecting the sanctity of their domains. Though these beings vary in power, it's safe to say that there is a correlation between the size and purity of their domains and their level of power. In exceptionally large undisturbed locations, e.g. Antarctica, these spirits can become tremendously powerful. That power is focused almost solely on keeping their domains pristine.

In some cases, an appropriate offering might ensure safe travel through a primordial spirit's domain. However, these beings can be duplicitous. I've collected a number of stories of betrayals. Further, once the spirit is aware of an intruder—and that knowledge can often come instantly within their domain—intruders will be closely watched. It's possible that an intruder who makes an appropriate offering and shows no sign of damaging the environment might be permitted to pass without incident, but I wouldn't stake my life on that possibility.

Avoid these entities when you can. Alternatively, use their territory as a trap to dispose of a tail. But don't try to combat them, dispel them, or even understand them. Their ways are truer to the environment than even the craziest ecoterrorist. It's not something that metahumans are built to comprehend.

- I'd love to argue against that, but Ethernaut's correct. There's no communing with these spirits. They're alien and volatile and unknowable.
- Ecotope

GAME INFORMATION

Strange Spirits introduces a diverse collection of spirits that don't belong to the ten archetypal spirits summoned by metahuman magical traditions. Since these spirits originate from other metaplanes or manifest spontaneously, they are considered wild spirits (p. 110, *Street Magic*) for game purposes. Wild spirits are always uncontrolled, they possess the power of Banishing Resistance (p. 208), and they are not always friendly towards metahumans. They are generally sapient beings with their own motivations and personalities.

CHAFFERING WITH "DEMONS"

While Free Spirits can be summoned through their true name, it remains controversial in the arcane world whether wild or extraplanar spirits—including insect spirits and shedim—have true names. As such, these spirits cannot be summoned and bound

by a magician in the classical way (with the exception of Insect Spirits and the Insect Tradition).

Still, there are occult ways to call such entities and negotiate with them for power (i.e. services performed by the spirit) or to enter into a spirit pact. Bargaining with a wild or free spirit can be a dangerous business. Their inhuman nature may be alien (insect spirits), horrific (ghosts), spiteful (fey and imps), or overtly hostile (shedim, toxic, and shadow spirits). Often, careless magicians (and also mundane "conjurers") get more than they bargained for and regret ever having called upon such beings for assistance.

Calling and Offering

Calling a free or wild spirit (including the spirits described in this chapter and those in *Magical Threats*, p. 134, *Street Magic*) requires an arcane ritual called an Offering. The procedure is simple if the caller knows the correct paraphernalia for the spirit he wishes to contact. Paraphernalia are unique kinds of conjuring materials that sometimes can include certain places, star constellations, and actions (for instance, sacrificing an animal). The exact nature is ultimately up to the gamemaster. By using paraphernalia in a calling ritual, a bargaining offer is magically made to a member of a specific class of spirit. The offer draws its attention and is usually answered.

Occult Knowledge: The composition of paraphernalia is always specific to the class of spirit (e.g. shedim, leprechaun, etc.). Identifying the necessary paraphernalia to call a specific spirit type requires an Arcana + Logic (20, 1 day) Extended Test, though gamemasters may opt to require that characters earn such knowledge through game play. This kind of occult lore is often hidden, inherited, or written down in ancient tomes and folios that are not easily accessible.

Crafting Paraphernalia: Crafting paraphernalia requires a successful Enchanting + Magic (Force of the target spirit, 1 day) Extended Test similar to crafting conjuring materials (p. 81, *Street Magic*). Exotic Reagents (p. 83, *Street Magic*) are often needed (gamemaster's discretion) to manufacture the materials. All reagents are consumed or incorporated into the finished product. Paraphernalia can be crafted by the summoner himself or a capable talismonger (i.e. a contact with the necessary skills and resources to create the paraphernalia) as long as the artificer understands the composition of the requested paraphernalia. If an enchanter does not have this occult lore, it must be obtained prior to creating the paraphernalia. In rare cases and at the gamemaster's discretion, talismongers may offer paraphernalia "behind the counter" for loyal clientele.

The Offering: The actual calling ritual is simple and requires just an Arcana + Logic (1) Test. After the paraphernalia have been offered and the right location and astronomical conditions have been chosen (if required), a spirit of the chosen type with a Force equal to that used in constructing the paraphernalia will manifest nearby. This will happen within moments of the calling unless the gamemaster chooses to prolong things for dramatic effect. The conjurer suffers no Drain in the process. The calling confers no services, and no roll is required, though destruction of paraphernalia during the ongoing ritual may result in unanticipated side-effects (for instance, the call may be answered by another class of spirit).

After a violent clash with thugs from the Doanescu family during her last run in Prague, Lyran stumbled across an old leather grimoire in the possessions of a cult. Written in an old Slavic dialect, the book contains the right mixture and ritual to call upon a Crone which she identifies after seven days of studying the book (rolling 3, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3, and 2 hits on the Extended Arcana + Logic Test). As a skilled talismonger who knows where to look, she pounds the local arcane markets for the ingredients (reagents in game terms): the knuckle of a spinster (animal), the eye of a one-eyed crow (animal), a mandrake root harvested after the vernal equinox (herbal), and a powder of rose quartz, pounded and ground in a Serbian Vencac marble mortar (mineral) that count as refined reagents. Having acquired sufficient amounts of the refined reagents to craft the paraphernalia and having used one of her local contacts to borrow space in an enchanting shop, she uses her Enchanting skill to prepare the materials to call upon the Crone someday. This takes her one day to accomplish (3 hits on her Enchanting + Magic Test).

Some months later, Lyran is ready and willing to make a deal with the Crone. Since the ritual requires the spirit to be called at night or in the dark (due to the Crone's Allergy to sunlight) in a swamp-like environment, Lyran

takes a trip to the sewers. She successfully prepares a place near a sludge pit, offering the paraphernalia by boiling them in a small cauldron (taken from her enchanting lab) filled with sewage water. Not long after the paraphernalia have evaporated, filling the surroundings with an obnoxious stench, a spirit in the form of a wrinkled gray-haired woman with a single eye emerges from the waters of the sewer, ready to bargain.

Bargaining

Called spirits cannot be forced into service through Binding. So a spirit must be negotiated with under mundane terms. What service it is able or willing to perform for the metahuman who called it is subject to the gamemaster's discretion. Bargaining should be handled by roleplaying, but Negotiation Tests (with the Spirit rolling Force + Edge in the Opposed Social Tests) may also be used. Note that although the spirit who answered the call is inclined to negotiate and not necessarily hostile, it may lose patience or become angry if not shown the respect it believes is due. This may lead to interesting consequences for the calling character.

The terms of negotiations (i.e. which services—including tasks or information—and payments—including Karma, artifacts, and pacts—the spirit accepts in return for the services performed) are up to the gamemaster. Often, spirits may demand (or trick) the caller into entering a pact (if the spirit possesses the Spirit Pact power). As a rule of thumb, no spirit will agree to more services than its Force, or it will demand "double payment" for each further service as compensation.

SPIRIT STATS

The following example spirits represent categories of wild spirits rather than specific free spirits. These may vary in power and specialties. Each spirit possesses a Force that determines its statistics. Force may be determined randomly as 1d6+2 or chosen by gamemaster.

THE FEY

While the creatures known colloquially as fey, fac, faeries, fees, little or wee folk are most widespread and entrenched in European mythology, they are by no means restricted to Europe. Many cultures have faerie equivalents in their legends (the Cherokee Nunnehi or Hopi Kachina of the Native American tribes, some Asian Kami, the Wayob or Huayes of Central and Latin America, or the Bakhna Rakhna in West Africa), although the distinction between nature spirits, wild spirits, unique free spirits, and faeries is often even less obvious and pronounced than in Europe.

In game terms, there are some abilities that are unique to faeries, though not all faeries have both of these powers. Foremost among these is the Vanishing power, which allows the fey to disappear from the physical and astral planes to unknown metaplanes. This ability makes it virtually impossible to fight or capture faeries, so it should be used with care, but it does make faeries exceptionally useful as recurring opponents. The second ability is the potent Fey Glamour power, which allows faeries to alter perceptions to create impressive and realistic mass illusions. This ability plays a key role in faerie folklore, as the fey use it to deceive and confuse others, mask themselves, and distort the terrain around them.

DESIGNING FAERIES

While these sample faeries are common members of the fey, it is by no means an exhaustive list. Gamemasters are encouraged to provide stats and abilities to fey folk as they deem fit (or based on their powers described in folklore) and in particular to create faerie types that are unconventional or do not appear in traditional tales to keep the players guessing.

Faeries often display some of the following Powers: Accident, Animal Control, Astral Form, Astral Gateway, Aura Masking, Banishing Resistance, Binding, Compulsion, Concealment, Confusion, Desire Reflection, Devouring, Elemental Attack, Endowment, Energy Aura, Enhanced Senses, Energy Drain (Essence), Fear, Fey Glamour, Guard, Influence, Paralyzing Howl, Innate Spell, Magical Guard, Magic Sense, Materialization, Mimicry, Mind Link, Mist Form, Movement, Mutable Form, Paralyzing Touch, Personal Domain, Psychokinesis, Realistic Form, Regeneration, Sapience, Search, Silence, Spirit Pact, Shadow Cloak, Sonic Projection, Storm, Vanishing, Wealth, Weather Control.

They may also possess any magical active skill (except those from the Conjuring skill group) or be able to procure magical services such as Aid Sorcery, Aid Study, Spell Sustaining, and Spell Binding.

Cicak

Meaning gecko in Malay, cicak are faerie spirits native to Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. Resembling lizard-like spirits in astral form, they often manifest as young Latin, Asian or Polynesian humanoids (depending upon the cultural area) when interacting with metahumans, but they still display the ability to walk across vertical surfaces and possess sticky frog tongues.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+1 F+3 F+2 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 15/45

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Fey Glamour, Materialization, Natural Weapon (like Frog Tongue, p. 113, *Runner's Companion*), Sapience, Vanishing, Wall Walking

Crone

Crones, sometimes called hags, Baba Yaga, or morrígans, appear as sinewy, gnarled, bloodless old human women with white hair, though ogress manifestations are also observed. Some choose to materialize with only one eye. They are solitary and they appear nocturnally and in isolated wilderness locations (forests, swamps). Known to consume metahuman flesh and spread havoc and destruction with their magics (including self-created artifacts), crones embody the darker nature of faerie that actually harm (and consume) their victims.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F-1 F+4 F+2 F-1 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Enchanting, Intimidation, Perception, Spellcasting, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Compulsion, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Innate Spell (Agony), Innate Spell (Bugs or Swarm), Fear, Fey Glamour, Materialization, Sapience, Shadow Cloak, Vanishing

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild)

Domovoi

The common name comes from a house spirit in Slavic folklore, but these are also known as brownie, nisse, or heinzelmännchen. Domovoi manifest as a small humanoid, sometimes hairy-bodied and bearded, that are the size of a goblin (or even smaller) and clad in peasant garments or rags. Domovoi are among the most benevolent faerie creatures, enjoying the proximity of metahumans so much that they take up residence in a secluded part of a home—usually a barn, cellar, or attic—to partake in the life of the place's inhabitants. At night, domovoi perform menial services such as cleaning and tidying, but they may also use their powers to defend their homes or help the home's residents, with whom they share an empathic relationship.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F F F+2 F+2 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Artisan, Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident (Domain), Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Concealment (Self), Confusion, Guard, Empathy, Materialization, Personal Domain (Force x 100 square meters), Psychokinesis, Sapience, Search (Domain), Shadow Cloak, Vanishing

Frost

King Frost (sometimes called Crackle Frost) is a solitary, mischievous, and sometimes malevolent prankster. While male or non-humanoid (snowman, whirling snow) forms have been reported, Frost may also assume female manifestations, so-called snow queens, or ice witches. All humanoid representations usually show a pale humanoid with blond hair or a bald head, which is surrounded by a freezing aura. The spirit often makes a crackling noise, like breaking ice, when using its powers.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+2 F F+2 F F F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Spellcasting, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Energy Aura (Cold), Immunity (Cold), Innate Spell (Ice), Innate Spell (Ice Sheet), Innate Spell (Blizzard), Innate Spell (Ice Wall), Magical Guard (Self Only), Materialization, Movement, Sapience, Vanishing

Weaknesses: Allergy (Fire, Severe)

Kappa

Kappa are Asian faeries that usually appear as child-sized frog or turtle-shaped humanoids with webbed hands and feet. While their faces resemble a mixture of monkey and turtle, their bodies have a scaly skin that ranges in color from green to yellow or blue shielded by a thick tortoise shell. The most notable feature of a kappa, however, is the water-filled depression atop its head which, according to legends, is the source of its powers. While they are usually seen as mischievous troublemakers in Asian society, they are also known to befriend mortals.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+5 F F-1 F+1 F F F F F F F (Fx2)-1 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Elemental Attack), Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Concealment, Confusion, Elemental Attack (Water) Engulf (Water), Fey Glamour, Materialization, Movement, Sapience, Search, Vanishing

Weaknesses: Allergy (Fire, Severe)

Knocker

Knockers are subterranean spirits that resemble dwarf-like simian humanoids with powerful arm and shoulder muscles. Miners by nature, knockers tunnel through caves or abandoned mines and frequently form and excavate new mines and tunnels with their magical abilities. Their name comes from the knocking on mine walls just before cave-ins that is usually the result of the knockers' limited quake power, which they use to drive off intruders from their domain.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
 F+4 F F F+3 F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 15/45

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Spellcasting, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision, Spatial Sense), Fey Glamour, Innate Spell (Foreboding, Shape Stone), Materialization, Quake (limited to Force x 100 meters), Sapience, Vanishing

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Severe)

Notes: Contrary to the Quake power of Greater Earth Spirits, Knockers can produce quakes of a maximal magnitude of only 4 (see Quake Table, p. 101, *Street Magic*)

Kokopelli

Kokopelli are jester or trickster spirits from Hopi mythology (although they are known under different names among other Native American tribes) that are usually depicted as humpbacked flute players with antenna-like protrusions on their heads which mimic the spirits' astral forms. When materialized, a kokopelli usually hides its alien appearance with Fey Glamour and appears as a disheveled Native American male or female. Kokopelli fancy all facets of metahuman music and usually manifest their powers by a transcendental sound produced from their cranial protrusions (which are actually pipes).

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
 F-1 F+2 F+2 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Artisan, Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Fey Glamour, Paralyzing Howl, Materialization, Sapience, Vanishing

Leprechaun

Leprechauns are faeries that manifest as small humanoids that can be easily mistaken for dwarves. While folk tales depict them in green clothing with a green hat and guarding faerie treasures (pots of gold), only the essence of the stories are true. Leprechauns are the faerie equivalent of business executives who become completely absorbed in accumulating riches (not necessarily in the classic sense of gold or money). While many leprechauns are craftsmen, some runners may encounter them as Mr. Johnsons (working on behalf of the fey) using Realistic Form and Aura Masking to hide their true nature.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
 F+1 F F+2 F-2 F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Artisan, Assensing, Astral Combat, Con, Dodge, Negotiation, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Aura Masking, Banishing Resistance, Fey Glamour, Materialization, Realistic Form, Sapience, Vanishing, Wealth

The Wild Hunt

The Wild Hunt is a congregation of spirits known under different names in different culture areas. The fundamental appearance in all instances is that of a group of huntsmen on steeds with glowing red eyes and smoky, flaming breath which is accompanied by feral hounds. The hunt is led by a dark-cloaked, faceless humanoid form, frequently bearing antlers on his head in mad pursuit across the skies, along the ground, or just above it. The manifestation of the wild hunt is particularly terrifying because of the baying of hounds, the driving shouts of the hunters in unknown languages, and the clamor of horses' hooves that accompany its appearance. Those who have witnessed the wild hunt and survived have seen different things, which is why spirit experts have hypothesized that its appearance in different cultures is due to expectations; the viewer's mind shapes what is perceived.

Although the hunt rides rarely and only at night, its ultimate goals are difficult to determine. Some believe that the hunt may be raised or summoned by great magic (such as the combined forces of the Seelie Court of Tír na nÓg), but it is clearly a magical force of immense power that is not easily controlled.

The Wild Hunt is intended as a gamemaster tool. An offering to summon it should be available only after careful consideration by the gamemaster and require components and lore that are extremely difficult to obtain. The Hounds, Steeds, and Huntsmen are presented as Force 6 Spirits, while the Great Huntsman is presented as a Force 9 Great Form Spirit. For some play styles, it may be appropriate to increase their ratings.

Hounds

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
8	7	8	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	14	2

Steeds

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
4	7	8	3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	14	2

Huntsmen

B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP
7	8	9	8	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	15	2

The Great Huntsman

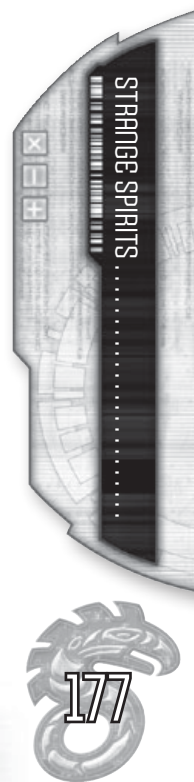
B	A	R	S	C	I	L	W	EDG	ESS	M	Init	IP	Notes
10	11	11	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	20	3	+1 Reach

Astral Initiative/IP: 12, 3

Movement: 15/50 (flight)

Skills: Archery (Huntsmen) 6, Assensing 6, Astral Combat 6, Blades (Great Huntsman and Huntsmen) 9, Counterspelling (Great Huntsman only) 9, Dodge 6, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Elemental Attack) 6, Flight 6, Perception 6, Spellcasting (Great Huntsman only) 9, Tracking (Hounds only) 6, Unarmed Combat 6

Powers: The Wild Hunt as a collective entity has the powers of Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Confusion, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Fear, Fey Glamour, Materialization, Magic Sense, Movement, Search, Vanishing, Weather Control (Using the Great Huntsman's Force of 9 as a basis)





INCOMING FEED.....

In addition, the individual members of the hunt possess the following additional powers:

Hounds: Enhanced Senses (Smell), Sonic Projection (Bellowing)

Steeds: Elemental Attack (Fire), Noxious Breath

Huntsmen: Animal Control (All mundane critters), Natural Ranged Weapon (Bow: DV 6P)

Great Huntsman: Energy Aura (Cold), Elemental Attack (Electricity), Immunity to Illusion spells

Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Severe)

Notes: As a Great Form Spirit, any of the Great Huntsman's powers may be used with the range of LOS (A). Unlike normal area effects, the Great Huntsman may voluntarily choose not to affect any number of targets within the target area. The Wild Hunt cannot be affected by magic that impedes its movement rate.

GHOSTS AND HAUNTS

While people commonly still believe that ghosts are the souls of the dead, most magicians concluded that ghosts are wild spirits that have become imprinted by the dead, turning up as echoes of the deceased. For rules purposes, ghosts are considered wild spirits, although some ghosts lack Sapience. How much a ghost remembers of its "life" is left to the game-master's discretion as a storytelling tool (for instance, on a run in which a "soul" needs to be put to rest by runners taking care of "unfinished business").

Most ghosts are free-roaming and may go bump wherever they want to. Ghost with haunts or chains, however, have additional restrictions and powers that modify their stats.

Haunts: Many ghosts have a haunt to which they are tied. This is usually the place where the ghost came into being, such as a house or a deserted alley. Spirits with haunts have the Personal Domain power (p. 214) which restricts all of their other powers to the domain. The background of the haunt has a maximum of $\text{Force} \div 2$ (round up).

Chains: Some ghosts have a chain, which is a physical object that ties them strongly to the physical world. These are typically possessions of the associated person, such as mementos and heirlooms. Ghosts with chains are considered to possess the Hidden Life spirit power (p. 212). As long as the chain is not destroyed, the ghost cannot be permanently banished or destroyed. Note that chains gain the powers of Immunity to Normal Weapons (with Magic equal to the spirit's Force), and Immunity to Age (p. 212). If the chain is destroyed, the ghost can be banished. While ghosts cannot be summoned and are rarely bargained with, a magician who possesses a ghost's chain may use it to derive a spirit formula that can be used to summon and bind the ghost as if it were a Free Spirit (pp. 107–108, *Street Magic*).

Apparitions

Apparitions are the most common and harmless of ghosts. They are unable to materialize physically, but they can manifest a visible and audible form. Such manifestations may include the classic chilling touch and clanking chains or a more pleasant appearance, depending on the nature of the apparition. Apparitions cannot directly affect the physical world or char-

acters in it with any of their powers (excepting dual-natured beings), though their appearance can certainly frighten and disturb people. They can fight in astral combat, but they rarely attack. Since they lack sapience and awareness of their nature, their behavior often repeats the actions which led up to the death of the ghost's once-living counterpart.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F F F F F F F F F F F F - -

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge

Powers: Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Fear

Optional Powers: Confusion

Notes: Apparitions cannot materialize, so they are restricted to the astral plane. An apparition that is killed in astral combat or banished is destroyed unless the ghost has a chain.

Phantoms

Phantoms are shadows of the deceased who lack the ability to materialize but use their Possession power to interact with the physical world. A phantom often appears in response to the death of a person who had unfinished business (often seeing themselves as souls trapped in the astral world on their way to the afterlife/cycle of rebirth). These spirits possess unwary mundanes, often children, to finish their business or continue a life. Phantoms are among the most likely spirits to "recall" their former lives.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+1 F F+2 F-2 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Fear, Compulsion, Possession, Psychokinesis, Sapience

Optional Powers: Confusion, Movement, Noxious Breath, Paralyzing Touch or Howl, Spirit Pact

Specters

Specters are more powerful ghosts that are able to materialize and affect the physical world. While they often become imprinted with the outlook and fragmentary memories of killed persons, they may also look like terrifying monsters or nightmarish creatures. Due to the generally violent circumstances (mass murder, genocide, war) that birth them, they lack sapience and are usually driven by hatred for all living things.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+1 F F+2 F-2 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light, Thermographic Vision), Fear, Guard, Compulsion, Materialization, Psychokinesis

Optional Powers: Confusion, Movement, Noxious Breath, Paralyzing Touch or Howl, Spirit Pact, Innate Spells. A spectre

may have Spellcasting, especially if it was created by magic or through the death of a magician.

Weaknesses: Some specters exhibit an allergy to certain significant objects associated with the dead metahuman from whom they have been imprinted.

Grim Reapers

The most dangerous of ghosts, grim reapers—also called black angels, ankous, yamis, or thanatos, depending on the cultural context—never appear as images of the deceased. Instead, they take on a personification of death. The appearance may vary, but the most common is a robed skeleton carrying a scythe, although modern versions of a goth girl with a sickle have also been reported. These spirits emanate decay, and they are often drawn to places where people tend to die on a daily basis (including hospitals and Z-zones), watching people die or accelerating deaths to draw karma.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+1 F F+2 F-2 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Exotic Melee Weapon (Scythe), Perception, Spellcasting, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Concealment (Self), Deathly Aura, Energy Drain (Karma, Moment of Death), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Fear, Innate Spell (Death Touch, Detect Life), Materialization, Movement (Self), Natural Weapon (DV: (Force)P), Sapience, Silence, Spirit Pact

HARBINGERS

While many spirits described in this chapter can be potentially malicious or hostile towards metahumans, they are still wild spirits that manifest due to a natural mechanism such as interaction between metaplanes or astral phenomena. Harbingers, however, have been corrupted by unnatural magic such as tainted magicians, toxic phenomena, or blood magic and become free or wild spirits because of arcane corruption.

Bean Shidhe (Shadow Spirit)

Bean shidhes are shadow spirits that materialize as old women with long streaming hair and dressed in rags or grey cloaks. Their piercing wails either lament the dead or warn of an imminent death in the perceiver's family. How they can forecast such deaths is unclear, though occultists and arcane theorists speculate that the knowledge is connected to the spirits' Divining power. Like shades (p. 147, *Street Magic*), bean shidhes use their foretelling of death to induce and feed upon the emotional distress of their victims.

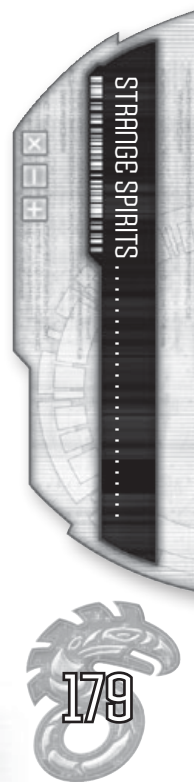
B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+2 F F+3 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+3 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Arcana, Assensing, Astral Combat, Con, Dodge, Intimidation, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Compulsion (Sorrow), Divining, Influence, Energy Drain (Karma, LOS, Stun damage), Materialization, Sapience, Search, Shadow Cloak, Sonic Projection (Wailing), Spirit Pact



Brocken Bow (Wild Blood Spirit)

The broken bow is a featureless humanoid shadow, ranging from two to five meters tall. While the origin of these wild blood spirits is unclear, it has been speculated that they may manifest whenever magic and blood mingle during the violent death of a magician (or the congregation of blood, magic, and killing). While most broken bow manifestations are linked to sites of witchcraft trials (where witches were burnt at the stake in the Middle and Modern Ages) and major Sabbath festivals, they may also manifest in urban environments given certain circumstances (such as the death of magicians during a powerful ritual with blood splattering over the place). Due to the violent nature of their creation, they lack Sapience and are driven just by their hunger for the Essence that they require for survival.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+1 F F+2 F-2 F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Deathly Aura, Energy Drain (Essence, Touch, Physical Damage), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Fear, Materialization, Paralyzing Touch, Shadow Cloak

Optional Weakness: Evanescence (-1 Force per week)

Nomad (Possessing Wraith)

A mental parasite, the nomad is a free shadow spirit that can forcibly possess a victim to feed from it. Using their Compulsion power, nomads drive their hosts into homicidal rages that enable them to drain their hosts' Karma once the hosts start killing. When the host is depleted or caught, the nomad retreats back into astral space. When assensed on the astral plane, nomads appear as amoeboid creatures of impenetrable blackness that are roughly 1.5 meters in diameter.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+2 F F+3 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+3 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Con, Dodge, Intimidation, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Compulsion (Homicidal Rage, Host), Confusion, Influence, Energy Drain (Karma, Host, Stun damage), Fear, Magical Guard, Possession, Sapience, Spirit Pact

Snatcher (Possessing Shadow Spirit)

Occultists have been speculating about snatchers for many years. First mistaken as spirits related to shedim and then falsely believed to be Toxic Spirits of Beast, it has been widely accepted that snatchers are a degenerate or less advanced variant of shadow spirits. Often referred to as "demi-spirits" due to their lack of sapience and bestial behavior, they are no less dangerous than any other shadow spirits. Although they don't possess the ability to materialize, snatchers are able to possess cadavers and animals. Driven by their hunger for metahuman vitality, snatchers can use their Energy Drain power only when damaging or devouring a living victim.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+2 F+1 F F+2 F F F F F F F (Fx2) 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Energy Drain (Karma, Attacked Victim, Stun damage), Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Possession (Corpses, Animals only), Search

Notes: Since Snatchers possess no Sapience, they act on "instinct" as animals do.

Tungak (Wild Contagion Spirit)

Known by many different names to different cultures, the tungak is commonly regarded by Siberians as a malicious contagion spirit that is responsible for causing all colds, diseases, and infections. Tungaks usually use their Possession power to forcefully mount a weak-willed victim and their Pestilence power to infect him or her. They spread the contagion just by residing within communities until the host dies and then moving to its next victim.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+1 F F+2 F-2 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Confusion, Enhanced Senses (Low-Light Vision, Thermographic Vision), Guard, Pestilence (Host), Possession, Sapience, Search

IMPS

Imps are tenacious extraplanar parasites drawn to magical foci, and they are able to subvert control over these enchanted objects. They appear in a variety of astral forms, from small humanoid figures and animals to stranger shapes such as floating blobs with a single eye. Like other entities that are not native to the nearer metaplanes, an imp's astral form appears wispy, almost translucent, and experiences Evanescence (p. 219).

Although they cannot materialize, imps have the Possession power, which allows them to anchor to the physical plane by possessing magical foci over which they may gain extraordinary control. Imps treat active foci as prepared vessels for the purpose of Possession, but they can subvert only enchantments with a Force Rating equal to or lower than the Imp's own Force. Since bonded foci are harder to subvert, increase the Threshold of the Possession Test by 1. Once an Imp possesses a focus, it cannot leave it voluntarily.

As a side effect of the possession, the focus is under the effect of the Immunity to Normal Weapons power, making it harder to destroy. Additionally, the imp adds its own Force to any Resistance Tests that the focus is called to make against astral attacks and spirit or spell effects.

Gluttony

Driven by their hunger for Karma and equipped with a strong survival instinct and a disdain for mankind, imps' tactics

are frighteningly simple: they target unwary victims from the astral by discreetly slipping into a magician's prize possessions—his foci. Most magicians are initially unaware that one of their foci has been compromised (also due to the imp's Aura Masking power). The imp's manipulation attempts are subtle at first (using its Energy Drain power, see below), becoming more obvious and dangerous as the imp's hunger becomes insatiable (and mostimps are very impatient). In an attempt to blackmail his host into a spirit pact to feed him with more Karma, an imp will ultimately use the Control Focus power to manipulate the magician's magic or even physically endanger him. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that imp possession also leaves magicians more vulnerable to Focus Addiction (p. 26, *Street Magic*). If the owner of a possessed focus is called to roll for Focus Addiction during play (p. 27, *Street Magic*), increase the Threshold for the Addiction Test (p. 256, *SR4A*) by 1.

While an imp will initially bargain with the owner of a possessed focus (via a Spirit Pact), the relationship in most cases degenerates as the imp's demands for Karma grow impossible. Realizing the value of magical foci,imps won't hesitate to arrange for the demise of their "karma cow"—if the magician becomes too much of a problem or has been bled dry (of Karma)—knowing a valuable commodity like a focus will fall into new hands eventually (using Desire Reflection and other powers to draw the attention of new victims).

Imp Energy Drain

Imps can subvert the mystical link between a bonded focus and its owner to siphon Karma from its victim. An imp may use its Energy Drain power any time a character attempts to spend Karma on a magic-related activity such as Initiation (p. 198, *SR4A*), bonding ritual (Bonding, p. 199, *SR4A*), learning spells, enchanting, quickening and anchoring, etc. The process does not hurt the victim, and it is unnoticeable if the victim is unaware of the imp possession.

Imps

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F F F+3 F F F F F F F (Fx2)+3 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Con, Counterspell, Dodge, Intimidation, Perception, Spellcasting, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Aura Masking, Banishing Resistance, Compulsion, Desire Reflection, Empathy,* Energy Drain (Karma)*, Guard,* Control Focus,* Influence,* Innate Spell (Alter Memory)*, Immunity (Age, Focus only), Magical Guard, Possession (Arcane Inanimate Vessels only), Psychokinesis (Occupied Focus), Sapience, Spirit Pact

Optional Powers: Innate Spell (Mana Illusion spells, Mental Manipulation spells)*,Mystic Armor

Weaknesses: Evanescence

Notes: An imp in astral form can use only mana-based powers. Powers that are marked with an asterisk (*) may be exercised only on characters who are magically linked or bonded to the focus that the imp is possessing.

PRIMORDIAL SPIRITS

Primordial spirits are wild spirits that usually appear spontaneously or that have formed a "population" within a certain environment. Although they resemble spirits of the elements in many aspects, they often possess a personal domain in which they reside (or to which their powers are restricted) and unique powers (or powers normally not attributed to a certain kind of spirit) that make them stand out.

Arboreals

Until recently, these possession spirits were encountered only deep within the Amazonian rainforests. Described as floating knots of twisting liana covered in blood-tinged leaves and thorns on the astral plane by indigenous shamans, their increasing activities have been linked to a secret cabal known as the Primeira Vaga. Whatever the motivation of the arboreals may be, they seem to share a dislike of all metahumans not following a deep green agenda.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+2 F F F+1 F F F F F F (Fx2) 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 15/45

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Perception, Close Combat Skill Group

Powers: Astral Form, Aura Masking, Banishing Resistance, Compulsion, Engulf, Fear, Possession, Regeneration, Sapience, Spirit Pact

Optional Powers: Guard

Gan (Wild Earth Spirits)

Known as mountain spirits in Apache mythology, gan (also gaan) are often venerated as benevolent kachinas by Pueblo shamans that act as protectors of earth and certain kivas. Although they have been mainly encountered within the PCC's borders, it has been speculated that they may appear at any mountain range (even outside North America) with a certain predisposition (which is hypothesized to be astral). Gan are known to possess the ability to move through solid earth and stone when materialized and to guard subterranean lairs and caves.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+3 F-1 F+2 F+4 F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 10/25

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Thrown Rocks), Perception, Unarmed Combat

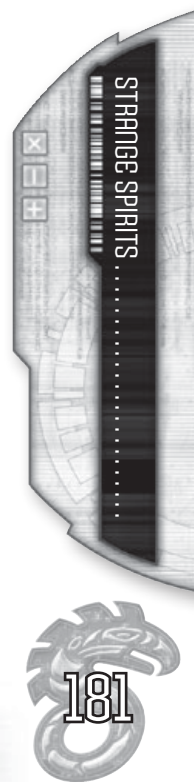
Powers: Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Binding, Guard, Materialization, Movement, Personal Domain, Phasing, Sapience, Search

Optional Powers: Engulf

Notes: Gan use a special version of the Search power that allows them to locate people, places, and objects under the ground.

Man-of-the-woods (Wild Plant Spirits)

This rare plant-like spirit appears as a slender human clad as a shamanic magician of the cultural area where it turns up (shaman or druid), although other forms such as a deep patch of shadow, a



walking tree, and a talking woodland animal have been reported. Man-of-the-woods are known to be very protective and territorial within their personal domain, persecuting any individual who damages the environment or harms its native fauna. In the course of exploiting forest and jungle, many metahumans have incurred the wrath of a man-of-the-woods.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+3 F-1 F+2 F+4 F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 5/15

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Counterspelling, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident (Domain), Banishing Resistance, Concealment (Domain), Confusion, (Domain), Engulf, Fear (Domain), Guard, Magical Guard, Materialization, Movement, Personal Domain, Sapience, Silence

Optional Powers: Noxious Breath, Search

Silap Inua (Wild Air Spirit)

Also called silla or “frosties,” silap inua are malicious air spirits known from Inuit mythology that materialize as snowstorms. Found only in Antarctica, the Trans-Polar-Aleut, and Siberia, they sometimes attack in groups and are known to disorient travellers with summoned blizzards. Their victims often become lost and freeze to death in the tundra or polar deserts.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F-1 F+2 F+2 F-2 F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 15/75 (flight)

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Exotic Ranged Weapon, Flight, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Concealment, Confusion, Elemental Attack (Cold), Energy Aura (Cold), Engulf (Air), Materialization, Movement, Personal Domain, Sapience, Search, Weather Control

Weaknesses: Allergy (Fire, Severe)

Storm Wraith (Wild Air Spirit)

Storm wraiths are hostile air spirits that occasionally appear during or after mana storms. They look like smoky, vaguely

humanoid shapes with eyes of burning electric blue. Sometimes a flicker of lightning may be seen across their surface. Storm wraiths appear to be an incidental consequence of the ravaging and violent mana storms, even though they are unaffected by them. It is unknown why they are so aggressive against metahumans, materializing often only to attack metahuman victims during a storm with savage fury. Storm wraiths typically dissipate shortly after the mana storm has vanished.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F-2 F+3 F+4 F-3 F F F F F F (Fx2)+4 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

Movement: 15/75 (flight)

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Dodge, Exotic Ranged Weapon (Electricity Discharge), Flight, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Accident, Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Elemental Attack (Electricity), Concealment, Confusion, Fear, Materialization, Movement, Sapience, Search, Storm, Weather Control

Weaknesses: Evanescence

Tanglewebs

Often mistaken for insect spirits and believed to be a variant of a beast spirit that resembles a huge spider, the true origins and affiliations of tanglewebs remain a mystery. While their true astral form is arachnoid, they rarely assume this form when physically manifesting. Instead, they assume metahuman forms to interact and meddle with metahumanity. Tanglewebs usually submerge themselves in human civilization, setting up schemes and building up intricate tangled webs of machinations that fulfill their unknown purposes.

B A R S C I L W EDG ESS M Init IP
F+3 F F+2 F+2 F F F F F F (Fx2)+2 2

Astral Initiative/IP: F x 2, 3

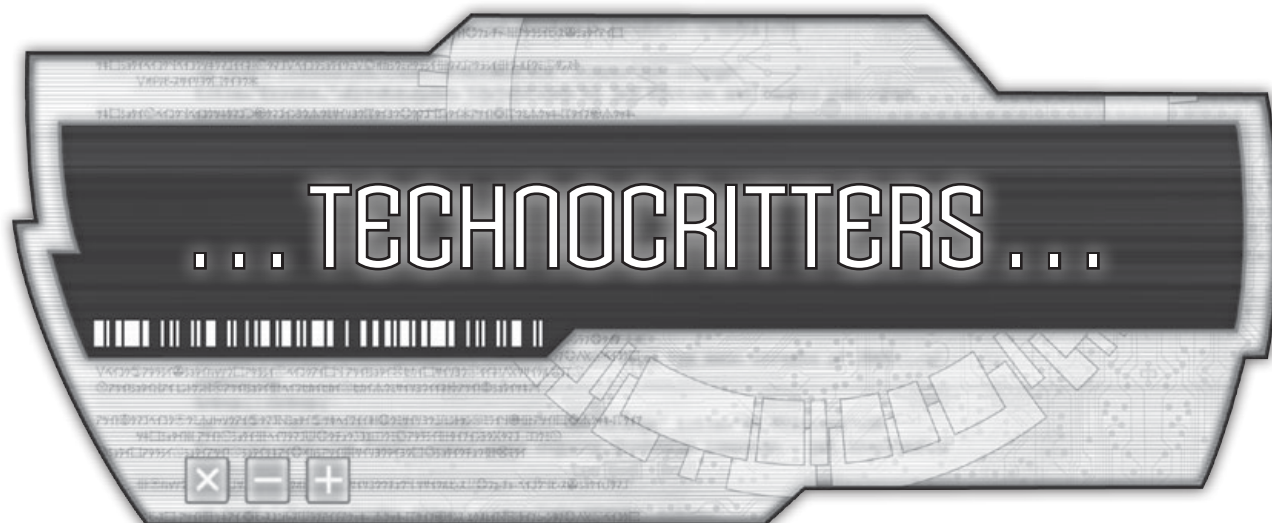
Movement: 15/45

Skills: Assensing, Astral Combat, Con, Disguise, Dodge, Perception, Unarmed Combat

Powers: Animal Control (Mundane and paranormal spiders), Astral Form, Banishing Resistance, Binding, Enhanced Senses (Hearing, Low-Light Vision, Vibration), Materialization, Movement, Mutable Form, Realistic Form, Sapience, Venom

Optional Powers: Natural Weapon (DV (Force)P, AP 0), Fear





There he was again. After throwing up for the second time this morning, Netcat spotted the tomcat sitting on the sill watching her while she returned from the bathroom. Third day in a row, she thought. Being a stray apparently, he usually came and left whenever it suited him. Which suited her just fine—she knew some would say she had the same habit. Or at least one person would say she did.

The tomcat had suddenly appeared one day some months ago after she returned from an extended leave in the resonance realms. She remembered him sitting outside in front of the window, pawing against the glass to catch her attention. While she wasn't really a pet person—too much responsibility, she'd always thought, and now look at her!—they'd somehow clicked like puzzle pieces. Now, he visited her irregularly. Since the Bandit had asked her to do some digging on a certain science topic, she got an idea why she felt connected to the animal.

She opened the window to let her visitor in, and he promptly jumped onto the floor and disappeared into the kitchen, expecting her to follow. She opened the fridge, putting some cold pizza on a plate and onto the ground.

"Suit yourself."

While the cat snatched the tuna from the remnants of her frutti di mare, she took a closer look at him. From the outside he wasn't really special, a moggie with striped and marbled patterns like any other common street cat.

Time to test the hypothesis, she thought. She concentrated, extending her e-sense out around her. Every node in her home was familiar ... every node but one. And that one ...

"Ha!" she screamed in excitement. To her e-sense, the Resonance of the new node was blazingly bright.

The cat looked up. Curious. Amused. Apparently she had gotten more interesting than pizza.

She wondered whether she just projected human emotion onto the cat—a common mistake metahumans made with their pets—or whether the cat could actually have such "feelings." Could it be sapient? Or at least communicate with her? She couldn't help herself. She just had to try.

She pinged the new node again, sending a message. "Can you read this?" The moment she transmitted the message, she already felt stupid. She was messaging a cat! What was she thinking? She could already hear Slamm-O! laughing. On the other hand ...

Arguing with herself whether or not she should even tell Slamm-O! or if she should call Bandit right now, suddenly a message popped up in her mind's eye, saying "Sure. Can. Took time. To understand. Funny two-feet. Meet on other place."

It could talk! Or message at least. Netcat was taken aback. She didn't know what she'd expected, but that was just ... mind-blowing. The Bandit had been right about these technocritters! They existed! And she had found one! Or it her! She was starting to freak out in a positive way.

The other place? Apparently it meant virtual. Netcat hesitated shortly and then sent an invite to the cat for a virtual room she set up in her bio-node.

That was going to be interesting. First Contact@Home. Awesome.



TECHNOLUTION

Posted by **The Smiling Bandit**

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." I choose to start my little "lecture" with this quote from William Shakespeare (Hamlet, incidentally) since the saying is more true now than ever.

It is ironic that even sixty years after the Awakening, which introduced (or re-introduced, depending on what you believe) a plethora of new paracritters into this world, mankind has not come up with an antonym for "extinction." And yet here we stand, observing the same phenomena again.

A while back, when I uploaded my Genetics 101 primer to JackPoint, Baka asked if there might be critters that can innately log on to the Matrix. It seemed like a joke back then, when research into the technomancer phenomenon had just started, but now we've found them. So consider this article the most delayed and most detailed response JackPoint's hosted to a poster inquiry. The truth is that, yes, there are critters that can log on to the Matrix just like technomancers.

- You've got to be kidding me.
- Clockwork

There have been rumors about "animals" roaming the Matrix in forums and SIGs since its birth, but most of the recent stories can be attributed to clashes between mundane Matrix users and sprites or feral AIs. Nonetheless, there have been incidents that have strongly suggested the existence of Emerged critters. With help from Glitch and Netcat, who did some in-depth hacking and digging, I was able to mine some concrete evidence.

- You're welcome. I'm just glad you didn't assume—like some people—that I shouldn't be hacking or digging in the resonance realms right now.
- Netcat

Expect the Unexpected

The first issue is that few suspect there might be animals with the same abilities as technomancers. Despite the similarities between technomancers and magicians, not many have wondered whether the parallels extend to the animal kingdom. When people encounter strange things, they usually try to rationalize away such phenomena. With all the vagaries of the Matrix, it's almost always possible to come up with a plausible explanation that does not require such an esoteric notion as a "resonance creature."

The second problem is that a techno-animal's involvement is not easy to notice. Their interactions with Matrix systems could easily be explained as a hacker, technomancer, sprite, or AI. After all, icons are simply software. Any of these may choose to take any shape in the Matrix.

// upload Uniformat text file :: user **The Smiling Bandit** // **FERAL AI IN PARIS MÉTRO NETWORK?**

The Paris Métro, the city's underground rapid transit system which had just been replaced post-Crash 2.0 by a modern agent-operated control system devised by ESUS, has recently been plagued by failures, malfunctions, glitches, and other network hiccups. The resultant late arrivals were a minor annoyance to

CORPORATE R&D HOT TOPICS

RUMOR: Parashield Biological Techno-Sniffers

(Posted by *Monkeywrench*)

Recent stories on green boards and cells of the Awakened Liberation Front indicate that MCT's Parashield branch has bred a species capable of identifying technomancers. It is unclear how the animal manages this feat, but theories include scents or pheromones unique to technomancers (published research shows nothing to support this) or an ability to sense the technomancer's hypothesized bioelectric "aura."

The real problem seems to be cost-benefit efficiency. Financial projections and market analysis for such bio-sniffers in security installations on corporate grounds or national airports may drive the price into the stratosphere. Either training or breeding the species might also be a major challenge that could create a bottleneck. It also remains unclear if the Techno-Sniffer was discovered in the wild, modified from a wild creature, or genetically fabricated. < Add comment >

Next-Generation Biodrones?

(Posted by *Reality Czech*)

I recently found a personal commlink that used to belong to a geneticist from Shiawase Biotech. There was an encrypted and databomb-secured video from a research project that I had to share. Apparently they have taken vat-growth integration to the next level, enabling them to equip animals with skillwires and train them with metahuman skillsofts (that's just my assessment of what was shown in the clip since I found no specs). The video showed a ferret which was able to copy metahuman fine motor skills. It picked a lock and was even able to electronically bypass a maglock (including an anti-tampering device). Damned impressive, I must admit. < Add comment >

- This post has been tagged by someone on your network.
- Accessing Tag ...
- Parashield's bio-sniffer prototype is some kind of techno-dog.
- Netcat

passengers, commuters, and tourists visiting the Paris Metroplex. As whole lines were shut down, the situation started to become more serious.

When a group of fifty-six passengers had to be rescued after Line 10 stopped dead in a tunnel between Duroc and Vaneau, the City Council began putting the screws to ESUS to solve the problem. Technicians were sent out to check infrastructural systems in the tunnels—ESUS had neglected to include diagnostic software. While checking nodes, the technicians were attacked by a swarm of insects that had been hiding in one node. When

Urgent Message...

TECHNOCRITTERS.....

combat hackers accessed the network hours later, the swarm was gone. Speculation suggests a feral AI has been hiding in the system that must be evicted.

// End Uniformat text file :: user The Smiling Bandit//
//Timestamp: 11/28/71 //

- After some poking around in the ESUS Paris HQ network, I came across this email that explains the details a bit better.
- Glitch

// upload Uniformat text file :: user Glitch//

From: Amélie-Marie Auger, ESUS Matrix Task Force
To: Jean-Pierre Calé, Head of Matrix Security (Paris)
CC: Peter Osborne, CEO
Re: Métro Incident

Jean,

I am deadly serious about what I wrote. It isn't an AI. I couldn't identify it, but it isn't consistent with anything from the AI data provided by ARM. We had the "swarm" cornered in an isolated node when it just disappeared from the system. We double-checked the logs. It just vanished as if it had logged off. It wasn't a single log off, but multiples, as if it had several data trails (there were 14 to be exact). When we encountered it later in another nexus, it scattered into several personas of insect-like creatures that "crawled" into different nodes and then vanished again. We managed to run a trace on the things, but when we triangulated the position, nothing was there. Really, nothing at all! We found no evidence of tampering on the node where we tracked the signal. To be honest, I have no clue what these things are. It is as if they were animals since they did not actually do much in the system except for sit there. And yes, I know how crazy that sounds.

Amélie

// End Uniformat text file :: user Glitch//

- I found similar reports from Seattle, Boston, LA, and Washington (I limited the search to NorthAm sprawls). The damaged parties (company public node, government office, city network department) complained about AR glyphs and icons vanishing from their networks. Since the missing icons were easily restored from a backup, these incidents were considered nuisances and were not followed up on. In one case, however, an overeager spider managed to track down the missing icon to a "ne(s)twork," a small network in the iconography of a bird's nest, where all the glyphs were implemented into the system for the sake of being collected there. He also reported to have encountered the hacker in the system using the iconography of a magpie. Not knowing what he was looking at, he nuked the poor thing out of the network and probably killed it.
- Netcat
- I never imagined myself as a hunter, but given the existence of technocritters I should grab my digital shotgun and reconsider that.
- Clockwork

// upload Uniformat text file :: user Glitch//
Proteus proprietary file format reformatted
Watermarks removed

*Confidential :: Only for Internal use
Distribute to all network security directors*

Network Intrusion Arkoblock Okinawa—Final Report

Following our last virtual meeting, the incident in Arkoblock Okinawa that occurred on August 26, 2070, may now be explained. You may recall that the arkoblock's enclosed network, accessible only within the defensive perimeter surrounding the arkoblock, was breached in broad daylight at 13.12.56 Japan Standard Time (UTC+9) by a number of previously unknown intruders. No connection between the arkoblock and Proteus Net was active during the time in question.

Due to the identical iconography of six intruding icons and their synchronous movement through the system's node, which was detected at 13.13.08 by a patrolling agent, the incident was initially identified as a joint strike by a group of hackers who had infiltrated the arkoblock. While unlikely and rare, security breaches by deniable assets have been reported among other arkoblocks in the past. Thus, such intrusions could not initially be excluded.

Reviewing network records and performing repeated audits on privileges and accounts, administrators concluded that the outer system firewall had not been penetrated and no accounts were subverted. As the unusual personas, mimicking a pod of dolphins, had just passed a number of delicate systems without actually accessing or downloading sensitive data, their motives were unknown. In spite of this fact, they managed to hack their way through the system to the arkoblock's maintenance and core control systems.

After a super-audit—that took two months to complete—of all data and computer processes performed within the time frame of the intrusion, it could be concluded that no files were accessed or downloaded. The "pod" apparently accessed the arkoblock's underwater sensors at 13.13.25 after crashing a number of agents and security spiders that were sent to eliminate the threat after alarm had been triggered. Afterwards, the pod issued commands to teleoperate underwater repair drones in Sector Kappa-6 before they left the system. Access to these systems was not heavily restricted. So this was first believed to a prank by rebellious hackers from the Prodigy Group. After interrogations, scrutiny of their equipment, and sensor-registered surveillance during the attack, the teens were cleared by the Matrix Security Directorate.

Although the way the intruders accessed the network hinted at internal access—apparently they logged on to the system via a backdoor without using an account—no evidence could be found. Through sensor and drone log analysis, administrators discovered that the intruders accessed the arkoblock's sensor network to locate a (biological) dolphin trapped within one of our underwater flues. These flues function to ward off underwater animals and keep them from triggering safety installations. They then used the drones to free the dolphin from the flue. Our sensor logs enabled us to track the dolphin to a group of five other dolphins that were in signal range. The reunited pod of six dolphins left sensor range shortly after the trapped member escaped. The presence of the same number of dolphins in the network and outside seemed an extraordinary coincidence that left us puzzled.

At the suggestion of Director Kolger of Arkoblock Helgoland, the system was inspected by a technomancer operative for traces of Resonance activity. The virtuakinetic soon identified

what he called “an unusual Resonance signature.” Following *lex parsimonae* (or Occam’s razor, if you will), the unbelievable conclusion is that the dolphins appear to possess the same abilities attributed to technomancers. They were somehow able to penetrate our systems.

As this suggests that other species with similar abilities may exist (management has green-lit a project to capture these special dolphins for research), they pose a novel threat to the integrity of our networks. All arkoblocks are advised to be wary of system anomalies and report suspicions of techno-animal species to Helgoland.

H. Sugimoto
Network Security Director, Arkoblock Okinawa, Pacific Ocean Division

Electronic Signature

// End Uniformat text file :: user Glitch//

- Ha! So much for making networks safer by seclusion.
- Baka Dabora

Since these reports clearly hinted at technomancer animals, I contacted an “old friend” for some scientific insight about this new research field. I was confident she had some knowledge and would be willing to share.

// copy-paste JackP Inbox :: user The Smiling Bandit :: 3/25/72 //

From: Dr. Kristine Martin [KAM]

To: The Smiling Bandit

Re: Emerged Animals

Bandit,

I’ve been waiting for an inquiry about this one. It seemed like something you’d be unable to resist.

Yes, I can confirm that Genesis is looking into that matter. In fact, our research groups were looking into technocritters (that’s what the scientific community has dubbed them) before we even knew that metahuman variants (i.e., technomancer) existed (which we are less interested in, for the record). I do have a few stories I can share.

As you know, we have a research facility in the Condor reserve east of Quito to study the biodiversity of species in different habitats and to preserve the domestic fauna and flora. During the ongoing research, a crew member from one of our new treetop laboratories (I’m guessing you’ve already acquired the specs) mentioned that a particular ocelot was regularly seen skulking in the trees below the laboratory. After the local research magician confirmed it was not a paranormal species (or a shapeshifter on a recon mission; you know the Amazonians always keep close tabs on our activities despite our good relationship with the “government”), the ocelot was captured and marked with an RFID chip.

The crew was surprised to discover that the ocelot’s appearances correlated with mysterious hacks on the lab’s system. The hacks dealt with database searches to locate certain RFID markers (living food sources and mates of the ocelot, as we know now), access sensors, or browse through our data stores. You know, boring clusters of data as well as personal stuff; nothing that would

interest a corporate spy. It took the crew, especially the spider (a biologist called Ramon Uria; add him to your watch list, he’s good), over six months to draw the conclusion that it was the animal. Even after he ran a trace on it, he couldn’t believe it.

Initially we thought it was a unique specimen, a quirk of nature. When the first corporate reports about technomancers appeared, the connection was obvious, although I would have never expected one to manifest in the rainforest. It is still something that completely eludes us (but to my own satisfaction, not us alone).

Regarding your research question, I know that all genetic corporations with a strong interest in technomancers, such as Pensodyne, Universal Omnitech, Proteus, Genom/Z-IC, Biogene, General Genetics Worldwide, and Shiawase, have research groups that investigate technocritters. While others are probably trying to identify genetic markers associated with the “technogenome,” Genom and Z-IC are focused on breeding or cloning technorats—they want to test anti-technomancer drugs on rats before metahumans. I don’t have to tell you that their motives aren’t ethical (given their pharmaceutical MO). Besides the bad press metahuman experimentation has caused (see MCT), it’s also cost-effective in the long term.

The incidence of technomancer abilities in techno-*muridae* (current auxiliary taxonomy) seems similar to metahumans (one-hundredth of a percent, according to projections; of course there are no “hard” data); at least that is our experience.

Before you ask, no, they don’t breed true, at least not in our animal facilities. I don’t think that that they do in nature either. If they do, it may be connected to the presence of the Matrix. (On a side note, cloning does not work. We’re positing that it’s the same problem as with paracritters.)

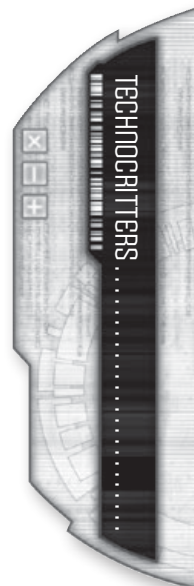
After some incidents in the compound (where the rat’s “persona” escaped into our networks, creating havoc) the rat rooms have been isolated. All electronic equipment was removed since the rats seem to be able to physically interface with any electronic devices. In fact—and this is really amazing (I can send you the data if you like)—we created a very complex three-dimensional maze (very hard to solve even for a normal rat), where we placed the rat with an RFID chip that contained a map of the maze. The techno-rat (or mouse) was able to access the RFID chip, read the data, draw its conclusions, and move through the maze without even probing other routes when given an appropriate incentive. We have been using this test to identify and separate rats among a population that are actually technocritters. Some preliminary behavioral studies indicate that they may also recognize each other and technomancers.

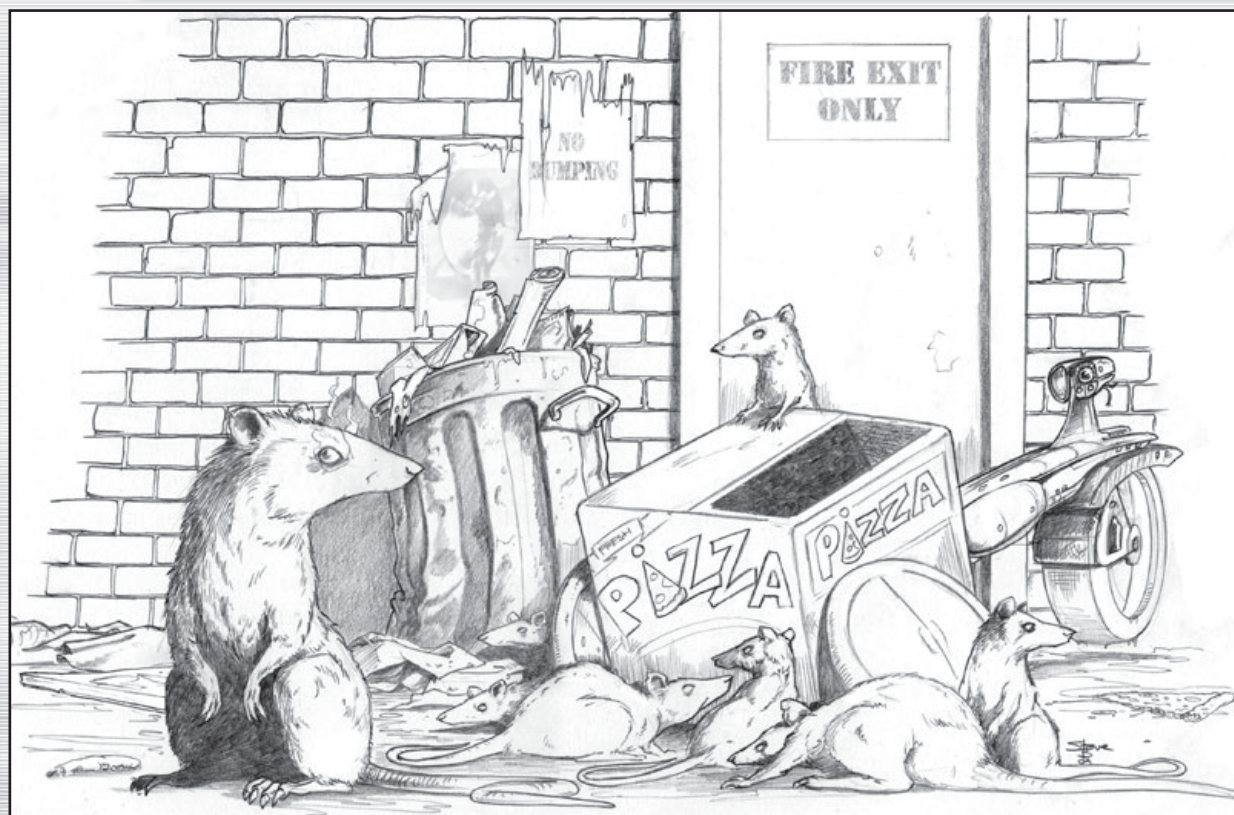
For breeding, we reconstructed the animal facility with wifi-inhibiting measures and removed all electronics except for a small hardwired network. We supervise that network, and they play freely in it. This may also help understand when they start displaying their abilities and whether it is a connate ability or learned from other members of their subspecies (given their incidence, I would suspect the former). We have contracted some technomancers for additional research with these animals.

I hope that’s helpful. If you have further questions, drop me a note.

KAM

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INCOMING FEED.....

SCIENTIFIC STATUS QUO

Since I don't want to bore you with recent publications, scientific data, and countless hypotheses, here is a summary of the current understanding of this phenomenon. Most of this hasn't made the headlines yet. After the public's extreme response to technomancer emergence in 2070, the think tanks (most of which are corporate) seem to have decided to gather more information before throwing half-baked info to the news networks for the sake of getting into the spotlight again.

- Besides that, this information is too valuable to be shared. Every corporation performing technomancer research wants to get ahead of the others. Understanding technocritters (i.e. non-sapient organisms with similar abilities) might be key to understanding metahuman technomancers.
- Mr. Bonds

So here are some facts. Technocritters are animals that share a similar genetic predisposition with technomancers. This quirk enables them to log on to networks and interact with the Matrix. Many see them as comparable to the relationship between paracritters and Awakened. At the same time, the reasons for these genetic developments and potential links to a co-evolutionary mechanism based on the Gaiasphere's dominant species (i.e. metahumanity) are very much in question.

- Although Emerged and Awakened are often lumped together for comparison, their abilities seem to be mutually exclusive due to (apparently genetic) incompatibilities which aren't yet scientifically

understood. This suggests it is extremely improbable that we will ever see an Emerged magician, Awakened Technomancer, or any blend of paracritter and technocritter.

- Nephrine

While most specimens have been discovered in urban environments where wireless networks and PANs are common, examples indicate that there is no endemism, i.e. no restriction to Matrix hotspots. Technocritters emerge ubiquitously.

Scientists in search of explanations and models have argued that access to a Matrix-augmented environment may give these animals an advantage for survival within the sprawls. Nevertheless, a few technocritters have been reported in environments where wireless networks are less common. In any case, the access or ability to interact with these systems has proven to be an environmental advantage for the animal.

So how do you identify a technocritter? Answer: you can't. Or to be more precise: it is not easy.

This is where technocritters deviate from paracritters. Unlike animals with a metagenetic background, technocritters are not their own species—yet. Like metahumans, there are individual specimens from a taxonomic group of animals that possess the ability, but they don't stand out physiologically. An Emerged beagle does not look different from a Mundane beagle. A very skilled mage or technomancer might tell the difference, but that's as easy as it gets. Another problem is that not all technocritters are of the same breed or race. A techno-dog could be a German Shepherd, a Chihuahua, or a wolf, which all belong to the same family (canidae). Currently, it is hard to assess.

- So your average fluffy house cat could be a technocritter, as could a predator like a jaguar.
- Netcat

As KAM mentioned (and other resources show), technocritters don't breed true. Even if you mate two Emerged animals, the result may not necessarily be a technocritter. At least, not yet. Since the number of technoanimals may increase over time (if there truly is a selective advantage), they might develop into a novel branch of the animal family that eventually breeds true. The time required is hard to assess and will probably depend upon the length of the species' reproduction cycle. Extrapolating from current numbers, technocritter incidence may be at least as high as emergence in metahumans and possibly even higher.

- This should be seen in context. Some insects can produce hundreds of offspring during their lifetime, potentially passing "technogenetic" information along even if the offspring is only partially emerged. The odds of finding an e-insect should be higher than finding an e-mammal.
- Nephryne

Since we know even less about technomancer genetics than we know of the metagenome (it's sixty years since the Awakening compared to seven years since the Crash), we could be completely wrong. Who knows what nature has in mind?

- E-critters, crazy shit. Call me a prophet. What else have we not seen yet?
- Baka Dabora
- Don't. You know the saying. Be careful what you wish for ...
- Axis Mundi
- Techno-HMHVV and e-vampires anyone? What about critters and spirits native to Mars?
- Baka Dabora
- He said it ...
- Axis Mundi

TECHNOCRITTER GAME INFORMATION

Technocritters—also called technoanimals, e-critters, or pejoratively digimon (digital monsters)—have a natural affinity and awareness for fluctuations of the digital world. While most inhabitants of the Sixth World have become aware of technomancers due to the events in 2070 (described in *Emergence*), public knowledge of technocritters is uncommon. While heavily researched, metahumanity is still far from understanding technocritters.

BESTIAE MACHINAE

Technocritters are beings in touch with Resonance, and thus they possess a Resonance attribute. Their interaction with the Matrix is based on instinct and learned mechanisms rather than sapient rationality or intuition. Although their animal intelligence is arguably beyond average for their species, they respond to impulses and stimuli with standard behaviors (natural or trained) like any other animal. The difference is that these stimuli may occur exclusively in the Matrix.

Instinct vs. Logic

Due to their instinctive approach, the decision-making capabilities of technocritters are often more limited than those of software agents (compared to sprites or technomancers) whose choices are based on logic and coded directives. As such, technocritters often flee if threatened, even if they outnumber their opponents. They rarely act against their survival instincts, even in the Matrix (agents, in contrast, have no survival instincts). On the other hand, technocritters are biological organisms capable of responding to changing situations, even if it happens intuitively.

When roleplaying technocritters, gamemasters should keep in mind that an animal's mindset is different from an agent's or a metahuman's and follows different motivations.

Survival of the Fittest

The ability to interact with the Matrix is a (r)evolutionary survival strategy. Mundane metahumans tend to see the technomancer's innate Matrix connection as a convenience. Technomancers view their own abilities to interact with the omnipresent information of the digital age without clunky tools as evolution. Technocritters, in contrast, are foremost practical.

Instead of relying on just the biological "options" of their species, technocritters use their access to the Matrix to provide them (and their population) with an advantage to fulfill their basic needs: foraging, hunting, and protection. By extending their senses through wireless sensors and cameras, they are able to detect food (RFID-containing or natural) or enemies more easily. Through manipulation of electronic networks, they are able to open and access doors (of shelters or just modern refrigerators) that would otherwise require a metahuman to open. For instance, an e-crow might learn to open a store in a mall by hacking the shop's network, triggering the release buzzer of the entry door.

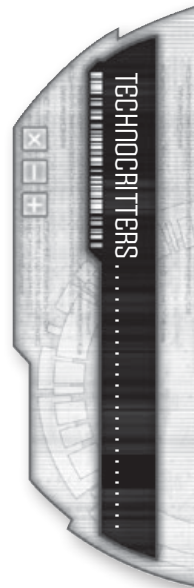
Since the Matrix has become an integral part of their world, animals can even leave virtual territorial markings or use the Matrix for communication with other technocritters that may extend an individual's abilities through virtual learning processes. Whether technocritters use the Matrix for mating or brood care is for the gamemaster to decide, but it's certainly within the scope of their abilities.

While not sapient, technocritters are able to interpret complex information (such as sensory data) that normal animals would not comprehend. Extremely adaptive, they are also able to apply things they have learned to solve problems, although problem solving still requires trial and error. While a technocritter cannot comprehend the meaning of account privileges and system access, for example, it might learn that acquiring a certain status might allow it to do something without facing retribution.

The bottom line is that technocritters are usually more fit (from an evolutionary viewpoint) than their mundane counterparts. Due to the presence of agents, sprites, technomancers, mundane users (although only the most experienced or trained technocritters can differentiate between personas), and system defenses (like databombs), the world has also developed a new range of natural enemies for technocritters.

LIVING PERSONA AND BIOLOGICAL NODES

In game terms, technocritters are organic computers similar to technomancers that form their own biological node with a





living persona. The persona is usually a virtual simulacrum of an animal form (sometimes a generalized version of it).

Technocritters follow the same rules for technomancers (p. 239–243, *SR4A*) and biological PANs (p. 135–136, *Unwired*), with exceptions described below. They can never become attuned or empowered by an initiated adept or used as a target for sense-linking spells (e.g. Borrow Sense, p. 166, *Street Magic*) that allow magicians to experience an animal's senses.

Animal Resonance and the Matrix Attributes

Each technocritter family possesses an average Resonance attribute that reflects the species' general ability to interact with the Matrix. Since the degree of emergence may vary between individual specimens, the gamemaster may choose to alter its value by 1 up or down to a maximum of Essence and a minimum of 1 (although augmentations may reduce the natural Resonance to 0). A technocritter whose Resonance drops to 0 loses all its Resonance abilities and isn't able to access the Matrix any longer (becoming a mundane animal).

The technocritter's living persona is characterized by the four Matrix attributes: Firewall, System, Response, and Signal (p. 221–222, *SR4A*), which are not based on Mental Attributes but are equal to the technocritter's Resonance (similar to the rating-based stats of sprites). Its innate Biofeedback Filter also equals Resonance.

Since technocritters cannot undergo submersion, their Resonance can never exceed their Essence.

Skills, Complex Forms and Threading

Technocritters possess skills, just like characters, sprites, and other critters. In addition to the creature's mundane skills, a technocritter may possess Matrix skills (Computer, Cybercombat, Data Search, Electronic Warfare, Hacking, and Software) enabling it to interact with the virtual world. Technocritters may never have Resonance skills to compile, decompile, or register sprites. Like other critters' skills, these represent the creature's instinctive knowledge and innate ability. Gamemasters may adjust skills up or down for particularly capable or inept critters, up to 3 points in either direction (to a maximum of 6 and never below 0).

In addition, each technocritter possesses complex forms determined by its type, which reflects its innate Matrix abilities. While mongrels possess the same nose for data as dogs have for scents in the real world, cats are known for their curiosity. As such, bastets possess the ability to illegally enter hosts using Exploit.

Some technocritters have the ability to improvise a complex form or imitate one they have observed using normal threading rules (p. 240, *SR4A*), resisting Fading with Intuition + Resonance. While those technocritters possess a Software skill for threading complex forms, they have a different understanding of software and code, which is even more primordial and intuitive than a technomancer's. As such, they are unable to use any form of coded software.

Due to their Emerged nature, all technocritters receive a +2 dice pool modifier on Matrix Perception Tests and all full-VR Matrix tests just like technomancers.

Resonance Powers

As technocritters are able to perceive the real and the digital world simultaneously, all Emerged species get the AR-Parallelism

power (p. 216). In addition, they possess Resonance powers that are comparable to the powers of sprites (pp. 242–243, *SR4A* and pp. 156, 159–160, *Unwired*) but often unique to certain technocritter species (for instance, the Anthropomorphism power of rapscallions). If a technocritter possesses a sprite power that uses the sprite's rating, the technocritter uses its Resonance instead.

Physical Stats

Technocritters are Emerged members of their species. They share the same physical stats, powers, and abilities as their Mundane counterparts (see Mundane Critters, p. 86) in addition to these Matrix stats. Since technocritters are naturally smarter and possess a greater awareness of their surroundings based on their Resonance abilities, a technocritter may have higher Mental Attributes (Logic, Intuition, Willpower) to reflect that, though no more than 3 additional attribute points should be distributed among the Mental Attributes (up to an maximum rating of 7). This has no effect on their Resonance abilities.

SAMPLE TECHNOCRITTERS

The technocritters described here are the species discovered so far. Res indicates the technocritter's Resonance.

Ahi (e-snakes, Technoserpentes)

Ahi ("snake" in Vedic Sanskrit) encompass all varieties of emerged serpents, and they may be boas, pythons, vipers or typical snakes. Snakes are kept as household pets in Asia, Africa, Australia, and Latin America, and gain access to wireless Matrix networks. While the motivation of snakes to scour the Matrix has

MORE TECHNOCRITTERS

Since technocritters can potentially emerge from species (e.g. aquatic mammals, fishes, reptiles, and amphibians) other than the most common ones covered here, gamemasters are encouraged to design new technocritters and provide them with stats and Emergent powers.

Technocritters may display some of the following Emergent powers: Anthropomorphism, AR-Parallelism, Blend, Cookie, Cozenage, Diagnostics, E-Hive, Electron Storm, Gremlins, Hardening, Holographic Concealment, Resonance Bond, Resonant Conditioning, Spraying, Suppression, Technovantage (Echo), Traceroute, Venomous Code, Virtual Mimicry.

In addition, technocritters may possess the following echoes (pp. 243–244, *SR4A* and pp. 145–148, *Unwired*) via the Technovantage power: Acceleration*, Amplification, Blur, Biowire, Coenesthesia, Defragmentation, E-Sensing, Firewall Upgrade, Flexible, Touch, Immersion, Living ECM, Macro, Mind over Machine*, Neurofilter, Overclocking, Sift, Skinlink, System Upgrade, Swap.

* Advanced echoes may be taken only if the technocritter also possesses the appropriate prerequisite basic echo.

Urgent Message...





INCOMING FEED.....

been much speculated about (it has been assumed that it is some kind of predatory training for them), they are known as fierce opponents in cybercombat when provoked. See Snakes, p. 98 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 4

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	3

Matrix Skills: Computer 2, Cybercombat 5, Hacking 4, Software 1

Complex Forms: Analyze 2, Armor 5, Attack 4, Corrupt 2, Exploit 3, Nuke 3, Stealth 5

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, Hardening, Technovantage (Defragmentation), Venomous Code

Notes: When using its Defragmentation power, it appears as if the ahi is shedding its skin.

Bastet (e-Cats, Technofelidae)

Bastets, named after the Egyptian cat goddess, are technocats. Members of this family range from domestic cats to predatory felines. Like their Mundane counterparts, e-cats are self-centered, independent, and extremely curious. They often wander the Matrix for hours while apparently sleeping, just watching data flow and constructs as they come and go to entertain themselves. They are also adept in sneaking silently into hosts or using access to the Matrix as a hunting strategy to prey on their targets. See Domestic Cat, p. 96 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 5

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	3

Matrix Skills: Computer 3, Cybercombat 3, Hacking 3, Software 3

Complex Forms: Analyze 4, Blackout 4, Corrupt 3, Exploit 5, Spoof 3, Stealth 5

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, Resonant Conditioning, Resonance Bond, Suppression, Technovantage (Flexible Touch)

Notes: As the most intelligent of the technocritters, bastets have a pseudo-sapience that can pass as sapience. Bastets can enter a Resonance Bond with metahumans.

Digit (e-Insects, Technoinsecta)

Not an animal family, technoinsects can come from any variety of insect. Technoinsects use their skills to trigger soy-machines to dispense food or change thermostats to create optimal breeding environments at their nest or hive. E-insects can be serious threats for metahumans, as they are able to thwart electronics in a host of ways through their skills and powers. See Small Vermin, p. 96 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 1

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	3

Matrix Skills: Computer 3, Electronic Warfare 4, Hacking 2, Software 3

Complex Forms: Analyze 3, Armor 2, Command 2, Exploit 3, ECCM 3, Edit 2, Scan 3, Spoof 3, Stealth 3

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, E-Hive, Gremlins, Technovantage (Living ECM)

Notes: Due to the small physical size of e-roaches, all tests to detect their persona or signature receive a -4 dice pool modifier.

Flipper (e-Dolphins, Technodelphinidae)

Technodolphins, nicknamed flippers, are one of the few marine technocritters observed. While their Mundane counterparts have long been investigated for cognitive capabilities, technodolphins have displayed comparably intelligent behavior interacting with the Matrix. While they usually scour the Matrix out of curiosity (it's believed that they do not differentiate between the virtual and the physical ocean), there have been reports of flippers interfering in Matrix combat (sometimes mistakenly in virtual games zones) defending or shielding the weaker combatant. It is unclear if this is a display of altruistic behavior that is characteristic of dolphins in general. See Bottle Nose Dolphin, p. 89 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 4

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	4

Matrix Skills: Computer 3, Cybercombat 4, Hacking 3, Software 2

Complex Forms: Analyze 3, Armor 3, Attack 4, Browse 1, Command 2, Disarm 3, Shield 3, Stealth 5

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, Blend, Tunnel, Technovantage (Overclocking)

Libertine (e-Raccoons, Technoprocyonidae)

Technoraccoons are improvisers and testers. Following their nature to take everything in their hands, they often stick their noses where they don't belong when dousing for interesting "stuff" in the Matrix. Versatile in nature, they are adept at improvising and sustaining complex forms when they need them. See Raccoon, p. 96 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 3

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	3

Matrix Skills: Computer 3, Hacking 4, Software 5

Complex Forms: Analyze 3, Command 2, Data Bomb 2, Exploit 4, Sniffer 3, Spoof 5, Stealth 5

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, Suppression, Technovantage (Skinlink), Technovantage (Swap, Rating 2)

Mongrel (e-Dogs, Technocanidae)

Mongrels (sometimes called lassies) are technodogs that are adept at sniffing out RFID tags, commlinks in hidden mode, and technomancers. They can reprogram RFID tags and use them to mark the boundaries of their physical turf and even spray "scent marks" in Matrix nodes. Due to their good virtual "nose" when it comes to data and information, mongrels are able to find data (or people) in or via the Matrix, when one finds a way to properly motivate them. While most mongrels are domestic dogs of different breeds, they can also include other members of the canidae animal family such as jackals, coyotes, wolves, and foxes on rare occasions. See Canines, p. 92 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 4

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	3

Matrix Skills: Computer 2, Data Search 5, Electronic Warfare 4, Software 2

Complex Forms: Analyze 4, Browse 5, Edit 2, Scan 5, Sniffer 3, Track 5

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, Spraying, Technovantage (E-Sensing), Technovantage (Sift), Traceroute

Nezumi (E-Rats, Technomuridae)

Nezumis include all varieties of rat and mice. E-rats often use their talent to locate RFID-containing foods in households or garbage dumps. Clever and intrigued by electronics devices, they can understand and interact with all kinds of gadgets, using them for their advantage. See Norwegian Rat, p. 93 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 2

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	3

Matrix Skills: Computer 3, Electronic Warfare 3, Hardware 3, Software 3

Complex Forms: Analyze 3, Command 3, Defuse 3, Decrypt 3, Edit 4, Scan 5, Spoof 3

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, Diagnostics, Technovantage (E-Sensing), Technovantage (Skinlink)

Rapscallion (e-Ferret, Technomustelidae)

Rapscallions include mustelids: ferrets, weasels, otters, martens, and badgers. Known as notorious ne'er-do-wells, they are energetic, curious, and interested in their surroundings, including the Matrix. Since they like to hoard, they often use their abilities to steal objects and bring them to their hiding places. As it is difficult to predict what objects ferrets will feel attached to, this may include digital information. E-ferrets have displayed the ability to mimic metahuman behavior and skills to acquire objects. This may be the technocritters' way to adapt themselves to the strongest predatory animal in the food chain. See Ferret, p. 96 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 2

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	3

Matrix Skills: Computer 3, Hacking 3, Software 4

Complex Forms: Analyze 3, Attack 3, Scan 3, Sniffer 3, Spoof 3, Stealth 3

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, Anthropomorphism, Cozenage, Technovantage (Biowire)

Rook (e-Crows, Technocorvidae)

Rooks include crows, ravens, jackdaws, magpies, and jays. Being able to fly, the technovariants of these birds are able to jump into all kinds of drones. They are also attracted by shiny AR glyphs, stealing them to build virtual nests in abandoned nodes (stolen or found commlinks). See Crow, p. 98 for physical statistics.

Average Resonance: 2

Firewall	Response	System	Signal	Matrix-VR Init	IP
Res	Res	Res	Res	Response x 2	3

Matrix Skills: Computer 3, Electronic Warfare 4, Hacking 3, Software 2

Complex Forms: Analyze 4, Command 3, Edit 4, Encrypt 3, Decrypt 3, Scan 4, Shield 3

Emergent Powers: AR-Parallelism, Holographic Concealment, Technovantage (Immersion), Virtual Mimicry

Notes: Since rooks are natural flyers, they may pilot aerial drones with a dice pool equal to twice their Reaction and default to Reaction for piloting other drones. Drones can be piloted while "jumped in" or commandeered to fly as part of a flock.



"Seagerson!" His boss's voice blared over his audio, "Get your ass in here!"

The hobgoblin nearly vaulted over his workbench as he sprinted down the hallway and through the door marked "Executive Vice President Shaunda Modzeleski, CTO."

"Here boss," he said, panting and wringing his hands. He gaped at his boss, who appeared to be sleeping in her finely appointed leather chair.

"Not my office, you idiot," came the voice again. "In here!"

"Oh," he said as he sheepishly sat in a nearby chair and flipped into virtual reality. He saw his boss's icon, exquisitely sculpted to mirror her mind-burning rage.

"What is that?!" He looked where she was pointing and saw a small orange ball. It had large feline eyes, a tail, and a tiny mouth with spiky teeth. It appeared to be chewing on a lump of garbage code. When it saw him, it bounced a few times and made a high-pitched giggle, as though it were happy to see him. Then it turned back to its task of munching on the code with focused intent.

"Er ... a feral AI?" he ventured.

"Try again."

"Um," he cringed and checked his analysis software. "It looks like it used to be a Stealth program of some sort ..."

"No, idiot, that!" She pointed again, this time clearly at a toy made of gears and springs. He recognized it immediately; it was an agent program monitoring all of the CTO's traffic. Closing on his icon, she said, "Did you know what I found when I traced that agent's datastream back to its source?"

He sighed, resigned. "Tell me."

"It led back to you. You who came so highly recommended, who proved so trustworthy. How could you betray my trust this way?"

"Let me explain," he said quietly. In virtual reality, he hung his head, then reached into his pants and pulled out a cream pie. With a sudden and fluid motion, he violently slammed the pie into her face. She screamed a digital scream as tendrils of virtual milk, eggs, and vanilla writhed into her icon's head and into her brain, causing very non-virtual cerebral scarring. Her icon froze in the macabre pose of a persona connected to a brain-dead user.

He mentally called up a commcode. "Run's scrubbed," he said. "I need evac."

"Acknowledged," came the response. "So things didn't run like clockwork, huh?"

"Shut the fuck up," he snapped. "Just get me out of this skyraker and back to Montenegro."

He crouched next to the orange ball, which bounced into his lap and cooed, nestling against him contentedly. "Oh, Wuzzie," he muttered, petting the tiny AI. "I can't take you anywhere, can I?"



Posted by /dev/grrl

Did you know there are animals that are actually native to the Matrix? Along with all those nifty AIs we've heard about, Pulsar and the rest, there have been even more feral AIs popping up around the Matrix. I haven't seen any yet that I know of, but a lot of people have, and I want to find one at some point.

Anyway, I'm posting some research I did on the topic. Top sources, good stuff. Sorry if it's a bit thick.

- The headers in this file are legit, no hacking or broken copy protection. Grrl, did you actually pay for this data? Getting slow in your old age?
- Pistons
- I had to make my parents buy it to get my paper past the graders. On the other hand, I convinced my teacher that it was a legit topic for a Biology paper. Suck it, NeoNET Boston High School!
- /dev/grrl

PROTOSAPIENT SYNTHETIC INTELLIGENCES

A report of the NeoNET Emergent and Resonant Phenomena Study

With the wide proliferation of the Matrix after the Wireless Matrix Initiative, there is now more virtual "space" in the Matrix than landmass on the entire planet. Much as in the physical world, not all the digital world is tamed by metahumanity. There exist many wild "places" in the Matrix where processes and phenomena are left unchecked, or at least unsupervised. Within these spaces is a set of systems; a virtual ecosystem. Due to the advent of Emergent phenomena, analysis of these systems requires Matrix engineering, information technology, and behavioral psychology, all of which are well represented in this study.

This paper is a preliminary addition to the body of Matrix systems knowledge regarding protosapient synthetic intelligences, commonly known as "feral AIs." It is dedicated to the memory of researcher Dr. Jay Kavanse, who lost his life collecting data on grues in the wild.

- Dr. Kavanse was also known as Mr. Johnson to a lot of hackers, and he was one of the best to wear that name.
- Smiling Bandit

BEHAVIOR

Protosapients exhibit behaviors very similar to those seen in mundane animals. Some are solitary, some are social. Each type has found and adapted to its particular niche in the Matrix. The behavior of a protosapient is most based on its niche in the virtual ecosystem but can be affected by code remaining from its origins.

Maintenance of Data Structure Integrity

According to the Keller papers ([link](#)), all types of synthetic intelligence require some form of random input to maintain structure integrity. This process is highly analogous to metahuman dreaming. Metasapients and xenosapients, along with a few notable protosapients, achieve this by inhabiting a single node and using the unpredictable traffic through it to "feed" their internal data structures.

Most protosapients do not use this method of inhabitation to maintain their structures. Instead, they have specialized to a

particular type of data which is "eaten" in a process known as mungeing. The protosapient uses the data it finds to update its internal data structure and overwrites it with random garbage data. These protosapients are classified as datavores.

There has been some conjecture about "breeding" protosapients to specific types of data or to munge without destroying the source data, but as of this writing there are no known successful experiments toward this end.

Propagation

It is widely held that protosapient synthetic intelligences grew out of the modern coding practice of swarm genetics. Swarm genetics programs are designed to spend idle cycles sharing information about their own algorithms with other swarm genetics programs. The program then combines new information with "known" information and adopts it if the resulting code would improve its capabilities. This practice is nearly ubiquitous in agent and IC programs and can also be found in many other kinds of programs, particularly those classified as Data Search and Exploit.

One of the techniques that non-sapient swarm genetic programs have "learned" is virtual spawning, creating processes and programs in an internal virtual environment for testing and potential incorporation. In protosapients, this process has become corrupted, and it spawns a real, novel program in the Matrix rather than creating a virtual program. Most often, these programs are non-viable garbage code, but sometimes it results in a new protosapient.

Normally, swarm genetic algorithms share information only with similar types of programs. When the traffic around a synthetic intelligence is analyzed, it is apparent that they are somewhat more promiscuous with low-level data sharing. This is true for all synthetic intelligences, but much more so for protosapients. The more similar the protosapients, the more likely they are to spawn a new and viable protosapient. This has resulted in metaheuristic optimization (analogous to speciation in animals) among protosapient synthetic intelligences.

- I'm sorry, did that just say that whenever I'm in the same node as an AI, it's having sex with me?
- Riser
- Yup.
- Netcat
- No.
- Clockwork
- Sort of. It's trying to share information with your persona. Think of it like pollen. If it's not your species it doesn't affect you. Unless you're allergic.
- Smiling Bandit
- Still, ew.
- Riser

Similar programs are more likely to spawn child processes that are similar to the parent programs. As a result, protosapients have undergone rapid specialization. Any two synthetic intelligences can spawn a new specimen, but as the number of distinct types



increases, the probability of such an event decreases exponentially. As a footnote, metasapient and xenosapient synthetic intelligences are sufficiently individualized that spawning is unlikely.

As of this writing, no protosapient specimen has exhibited an “instinct” or mechanism for deliberate program spawning. Clearly, any specimen that does develop such behavior will be at a great advantage and likely populate the Matrix with protosapients. It is the unanimous opinion of the members of this study that measures be taken now to mitigate the effects of such a development.

ICONOGRAPHY

Protosapients are unique among synthetic intelligences in that they rarely have control over their iconography. Many specimens exhibit some semblance of the icons of commercially available products, which supports the theory that protosapients evolved from current programs.

A protosapient’s appearance in the Matrix does not typically change over its lifetime, although a few known specimens have learned to change icons as easily as sapient Matrix users. As with metasapient synthetic intelligences, protosapients seem to become stronger and more adroit over time, which is consistent with theories found in McCarthy, Pulsar, et al. ([link](#)).

Categorization

The categorization of synthetic intelligences is ongoing, but some details have been agreed upon. Protosapients are differentiated by behavior and the kind of data used to maintain integrity.

While appropriate nomenclature is used for each known type of protosapient, the great majority of new protosapients are discovered in the wild and named by popular consensus. As a result, many protosapient types have two names, one an official designation and another that can at best be described as “cute.” Multiple names, however, are a problem that has been indigenous to computer science since its infancy.

Despite analogous behavior, protosapients are not living entities. The classification of protosapients into the domain of Bionica, the kingdom Automata, phylum Sentiens, class Virtua, and order Datavora is a humorous meme that should not be used in scientific publications.

ORIGIN

Autonomous programs have been in existence for decades. However, self-aware programs capable of autonomous behavior have only recently become evident. The current consensus is that protosapient synthetic intelligences emerged by accident. There are a number of theories for this emergence, including a result of genetic programming, the creation of deliberate research, and even a singularity event involved with the incident known as the Crash 2.0. The origins of protosapient species remain a matter for further research.

GAME INFORMATION

The following rules pertain to protosapient AIs.

PROTOSAPIENT LIFE

Feral AIs live where they can in the Matrix. They find niches, munge on data, and reproduce. For all intents and purposes, they

are animals that live exclusively in the Matrix. They are also AIs that follow the normal rules for AIs (p. 165, *Unwired*), except as follows in this chapter.

Rating

Feral AIs have a rating upon which their attributes and skills are based. A newly born feral AI usually starts with a rating of 1. Over its lifetime, the feral AI matures naturally, with its rating increasing over time; typical time frames for this process are given on the Feral AI Table. This growth applies to feral AIs in general, but specific instances may increase or slow a feral AI’s development.

Some feral AI skills, programs, and attributes are listed as the AI’s rating minus a certain number. If the rating of a skill or program would be less than 1, that AI does not have the skill or program in question. Conversely, the minimum value for an AI attribute is 1.

Matrix Attributes

The System and Firewall attributes of a feral AI are equal to its rating. Its Response and Signal ratings are the same as those of the node it occupies. A feral AI has a Matrix Condition Monitor with a number of boxes equal to 8 + half its System rating (rounded up).

Mungeing

Most feral AIs are datavores, meaning that they have no home node and “eat” code to stay alive. This process is called mungeing (pronounced “munj-ing”). When a feral AI munges data, it leaves behind random data which usually destroys or distorts whatever is being munged. For example, a munged icon might look like an indistinct mess, while a munged program would become either buggy or completely unusable.

Mungeing is an Extended Intuition + Logic (16, 1 Initiative Pass) Test. If the AI is interrupted during this process, the data remains intact and not munged. To munge a file, the AI must have access to it. To munge a program, the AI must be in either the same node in which the program is running or the same node as a persona that is running the program.

The gamemaster determines the extent of the damage caused by munging data using the following guidelines: Software should have its rating decreased by the rating of the mungeing AI. Data and network traffic may be partially corrupted (about one-sixth times the rating of the mungeing AI), or the gamemaster may impose a Computer + Browse threshold equal to the mungeing AI’s rating to read the file. Icons may become twisted and corrupted.

A feral AI must munge regularly, or its rating is reduced by 1; the interval is listed on the Feral AI Table. Feral AIs reduced to Rating 0 expire and are destroyed. Feral AIs that do not have the Datavore quality follow the standard rules for home nodes (p. 166, *Unwired*).

PROTOSAPIENT SAPIENCE

Feral AIs are not sapient. Their intelligence is at best equal to a cunning Mundane animal. See Sapience (p. 24), for more information on feral AI intelligence. Feral AIs respond as normal critters to the Animal Handling and Animal Training skills (p. 35); the applicable specialization is Protosapient. They are Emergent animals with no physical form, so they must be trained in AR or VR.



PROTOSAPIENT QUALITIES

These are some of the qualities exhibited by protosapients. Unless otherwise specified, these powers affect only nodes and/or icons in the Matrix. All feral AIs have the Real World Naiveté quality.

Animator

Feral AIs with this power are considered zombie masters (see *Zombies*, p. 201). Whenever the feral AI munges, it makes a System + Willpower Test with a threshold equal to the Firewall rating of the node it occupies. If it succeeds, it creates a new spawn of the type associated with the zombie master. If it gets a critical success, it creates a new zombie master of its type, which its spawn immediately attack and move to a different node. This power also enables the feral AI to produce files that its spawn can munge.

Datavore

This quality enables most feral AIs to survive in the Matrix. Feral AIs with this quality munge the data they find, “eating” it and leaving scrambled garbage data in their wake. This quality must be taken for a specific type of data, for example, “encrypted traffic,” “text files,” or even “the blue color in icons.” AIs with this quality do not have a home node and cannot make a node their home. This quality is available only to protosapient AIs.

Fnord

An AI with this quality is particularly good at hiding in the Matrix. Any non-sapient entity in the Matrix—agent, IC, technocritter, or other feral AI—that fails to garner any net hits against an AI with the Fnord quality in a Matrix Perception Test cannot perform any further Matrix Perception Tests against it for as long as it remains in the node.

Nyetworking

The AI with this quality interferes with communications in the node it occupies, slowing subscriptions and lagging connections. Any persona or agent attached to a persona that is accessing the node via a subscription has its Response reduced by the rating of the feral AI. Persona programs and other programs that are running in the node are unaffected.

Persnickety Renter

The AI with this quality creates home nodes (p. 166, *Unwired*), but it is limited in the type of node which it may make.

FERAL AI TABLE

Age	Rating	Mungeing Interval
2 months	1	1 month
4 months	2	2 weeks
8 months	3	5 days
16 months	4	2 days
3 years	5	24 hours
7 years	6	8 hours

AI QUALITIES

The following qualities from *Unwired* are used in this section. They are listed with their page sources.

Authority	p. 168, <i>Unwired</i>
Code Flux	p. 168, <i>Unwired</i>
Codivore	p. 168, <i>Unwired</i>
Designer	p. 168, <i>Unwired</i>
Drone Pilot	p. 169, <i>Unwired</i>
Improved Realignment	p. 169, <i>Unwired</i>
Intuitive Hacking	p. 37, <i>Unwired</i>
Real World Naiveté	p. 170, <i>Unwired</i>
Redundancy	p. 169, <i>Unwired</i>
Rootkit	p. 169, <i>Unwired</i>
Sapper	p. 169, <i>Unwired</i>
Snooper	p. 169, <i>Unwired</i>

This quality is taken for a specific type of node (e.g. toasters, drones, Rating 4+, etc.).

POKEr

An AI with the POKEr quality has a knack for accessing the low-level memory of its targets. When making a test that is resisted by a target's System or Firewall (or both), the AI receives a +2 dice pool modifier.

Teergrube

An AI with Teergrube (“tehr-groo-beh,” German for “tar pit”) has some latent but very reactive black IC code in its makeup. Any persona that uses an action requiring the Cybercombat or Hacking skill against the AI has its link jammed open, as if the persona had been the target of a successful black IC attack (p. 237, *SR4A*). Use the AI's rating and Response to resist any attempt to jack out by a target.

Uncertainty

The AI with this quality unconsciously alters the underlying programming of a node, making computer operations less certain for everyone else. Any other entity in the node occupied by the AI, including the node's System software, has trouble using the node as intended. Treat this effect as having the Gremlins quality (p. 94, *SR4A*) at a rating equal to half the rating of the AI with Uncertainty. This affects every entity in the node except those of the same species as the AI with this quality.

PROTOSAPIENT COMBAT

Feral AIs follow the combat rules given on p. 166, *Unwired*, with the following additions. A feral AI with the Datavore quality in the process of realigning can be moved to another node by another Matrix entity using the Transfer Data action. Although an AI with the Datavore quality has no home node, any node counts as the “home node” of such an AI for purposes of recovering from Matrix damage or permanent destruction.

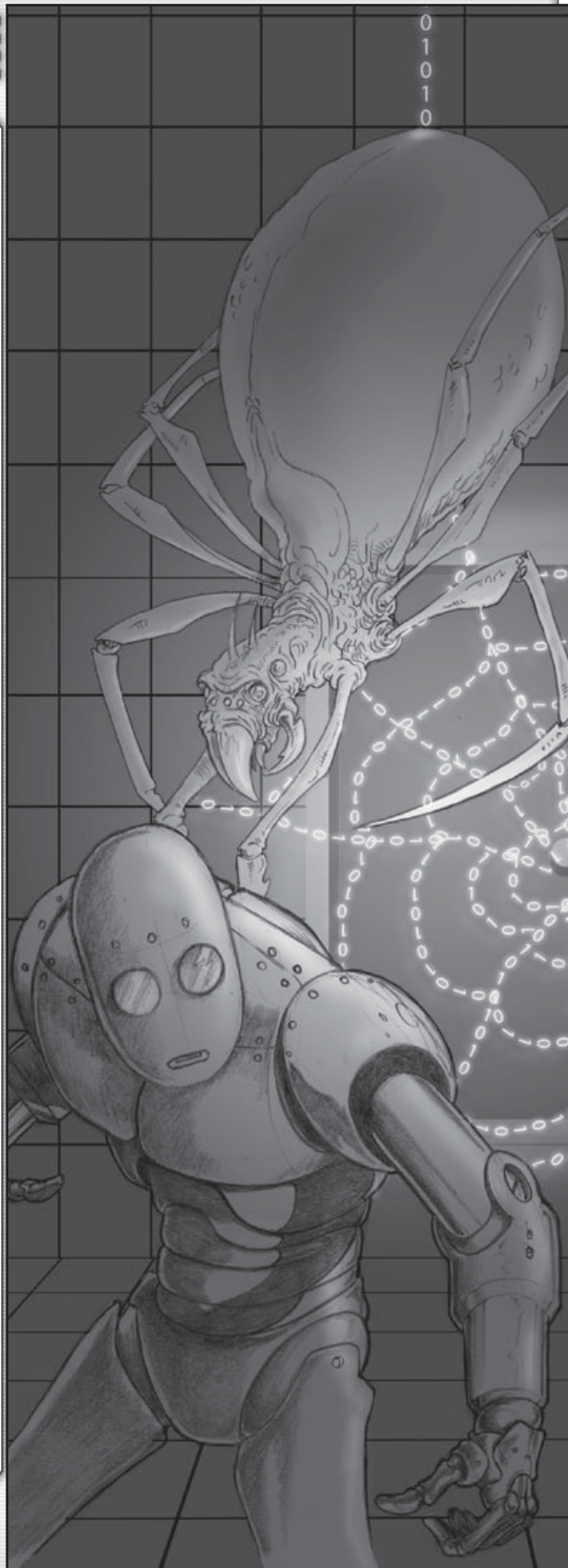
Urgent Message...

PROTOSAPIENTS

INCOMING FEED.....

0
1
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PROTOSAPIENTS.....



PROTOSAPIENT CRITTERS

The following are known feral AI types, listed by category and popular name (official name is given in *italics*). As of 2072, all feral AIs are rare in frequency. “R” indicates the rating of the AI.

DESTROYER PROTOSAPIENTS

Unlike most other protosapients, destroyers are highly dangerous to entities in the Matrix.

Daemon

Predator Cannibal

The daemon is a dangerous predator that lurks in the Matrix, attacking other AIs. Most of the time it lies hidden, but when hungry it pounces on any AI unlucky enough to wander into its node. It usually remains in a single node, but it will sneak into other nodes to find prey if necessary.

The daemon appears as a classical demon without a torso but with wings, arms, and legs sprouting from a single elongated horned head. Its color ranges from dark grey to black.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R+1	R	R	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R+1), Hacking (R), Intimidation (R-1)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R), Attack (R+1), Browse (R), Cascading (R/2), Expert Offense (R/2), Exploit (R-1), Stealth (R+1)

Qualities: Codivore, Datavore (Realigning AIs), Fnord, Real World Naiveté, Redundancy

Frobnitz

Resonovore

The frobnitz appears as a metahuman with the behaviors of a feral AI, which invokes the “uncanny valley effect” on metahuman observers. Even more disturbing to technomancers, it munges the semi-random and indecipherable code found in sprites.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R+1	R-1	R+1	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R+2), Hacking (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R+1), Attack (R+2), Cascading (R/2), Disarm (R+1), Expert Offense (R/2), Exploit (R), Reality Filter (R)

Qualities: Datavore (Sprites), Real World Naiveté, Sapper, Snooper

Grue

Personavore

The grue is the terror of the Matrix. It creeps into the less-used nodes of the Matrix and awaits a victim. It hunts by attacking Matrix users, usually waiting until they are alone, killing them with Black Hammer, and feasting on the hung persona program left behind. Details of its iconography are sketchy, but most reports agree that it has a bulky humanoid figure with “worms” for limbs.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R+1	R	R+1	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R+1), Hacking (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R), Attack (R-1), Black Hammer (R), Cascading (R/2), Expert Offense (R/3), Exploit (R-2), Stealth (R)

Qualities: Authority, Datavore (Persona Programs of Dead Users), Fnord, Real World Naiveté, Rootkit, Teergrube

INFOVORE PROTOSAPIENTS

Infovores are destructive to files or other information, but they are rarely dangerous.

Blob

Mediavore

A blob appears as a large yellow-green mass of viscous fluid that oozes over the sculpting of a node. It is a solitary AI that seeks out and munges large portions of highly formatted data such as video, trideo, icon, and simsense files. Blobs usually keep to themselves when not in search of food, but they have been known to attack personas and agents for their icon data.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R	R	R	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R-1), Cybercombat (R), Data Search (R), Intimidation (R-2)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R+1), Attack (R), Blackout (R-3), Browse (R), Medic (R-1)

Qualities: Datavore (Multimedia Files), POKEr, Real World Naiveté, Redundancy, Teergrube

Gimp

Colorevore

The gimp appears as a brown eight-legged treeshrew with a paintbrush in its mouth. It is the scourge of artists and graphic designers. The gimp is highly social, and packs of gimps can be seen travelling node to node, feeding on the sculpting of nodes, icons, and AROs. Each specimen munges image data of a specific color, leaving strangely hued icons in its wake.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R+1	R	R-1	R-1	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R-3), Hacking (R-1)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R-2), Attack (R-2), Exploit (R), Medic (R)

Qualities: Authority, Datavore (Specific Color in Images), Real World Naiveté

Prowler

Protosapient Ad Editor

The prowler is a user's dream come true and highly sought after by residents of spam zones. The prowler appears as a red or blue boar with thirteen mouths over its body. It munges advertising AROs, leaving them twisted, garbled and far less annoying.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R	R	R	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R), Data Search (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R), Attack (R), Browse (R)

Qualities: Authority, Datavore (Advertising AROs), Intuitive Hacking (Exploit), Real World Naiveté, Redundancy

SINtax

Identivore

The SINtax appears as a stiff metahuman salaryman, jointed in all the wrong places. It creeps through the Matrix's most populated areas, mungeing SIN data from commlinks.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R+1	R	R-1	R	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Data Search (R), Hacking (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R-1), Browse (R), Decrypt (R+1), Exploit (R), Stealth (R)

Qualities: Code Flux, Datavore (SIN Data), Intuitive Hacking (Spoof), Real World Naiveté, Rootkit

Tentacle

Iconovore

The tentacle looks like a long, dark, flexible limb that winds around the icons in a node with no discernable source. It feeds on the icons of personas. Most of the time, a munged icon is merely annoying and an eyesore, but links have been known to go dead after a tentacle has had its fill. It is usually kept out of upscale areas, but it can be found infesting seedier nodes.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R-1	R	R-2	R+1	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R+1), Hacking (R-1)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R), Attack (R), Disarm (R), Expert Defense (R/2), Expert Offense (R/2), Exploit (R-2), Stealth (R-1)

Qualities: Datavore (Persona Icons), Nyetworking, Real World Naiveté, Redundancy, Teergrube

NAIVE PROTOSAPIENTS

Naive protosapients are not particularly aware of their surroundings nor are they very harmful to information or entities in the Matrix. This is not to say that they are never a threat.

Cyberwerewolf

Cybernetic Firmware Interloper

The cyberwerewolf is an extremely territorial feral AI. Its appearance resembles a black or gray two-headed wolf. It is thought that the cyberwerewolf has specialized to use diagnostics and biofeedback data from cybernetics to survive, as it is found almost exclusively in the nodes of cyberware.

The cyberwerewolf is very defensive of its home node. It does not allow diagnostic data to be sent from it, and it ferociously attacks any intruding icon that is not of its own species. It does not affect cyberware's neural connections, allowing bodyware and similar cyberware to function normally.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R+2	R-1	R+2	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R+1), Hacking (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R), Attack (R+2), Cascading (R/2), Homeground (R), Medic (R-3)

Qualities: Authority, Codivore, Designer, Intuitive Hacking (Exploit), Persnickety Renter (Cyberware), POKEr, Real World Naiveté

Heap Frog

Aporrimatophaga

The heap frog is the most commonly domesticated feral AI. It munges garbage data in areas of a node's unassigned memory, so feeding does not interfere with node operations so long as the node is not running at capacity. It appears as a translucent kite-cut gemstone with a face and five legs with colorations varying from yellow-green to greenish-brown.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R+1	R	R-2	R-1	R	INT + Response		3



Skills: Computer (R), Data Search (R)
Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R-3), Browse (R)
Qualities: Code Flux, Datavore (Unused Process Memory), Real World Naiveté

Heavyweight

Olophage

The heavyweight is generally docile, wandering from node to node. When it gets hungry, it munges the first thing it encounters, whether that be a file, Firewall software, persona, or anything else except another heavyweight. Most spiders and administrators leave these alone, hoping that they will move on before they munge.

A heavyweight appears as a huge armored van with willowy legs instead of wheels and a gaping maw in its undercarriage. They have green-and-black markings.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R-1	R	R	R+2	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R+1), Hacking (R-1), Intimidation (R+1)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R+2), Attack (R), Expert Defense (R/2), Exploit (R-2)

Qualities: Datavore (Any), Improved Realignment, Real World Naiveté, Redundancy

Rogue

Rogue Pilot

The rogue is alone among feral AIs in its knowledge of the physical world. It takes over drones and vehicles to physically place itself into areas of high wireless traffic. In the Matrix, it appears as a control panel appropriate to the node it occupies.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R+1	R+1	R	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R-1), Electronic Warfare (R+1), Hacking (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R), Attack (R-1), Browse (R), Command (R), Corrupt (R), ECCM (R), Exploit (R-2), Scan (R), Spoof (R)

Qualities: Authority, Code Flux, Datavore (Wireless Traffic), Drone Pilot (Ground Vehicles)

OBFUSCATOR PROTOSAPIENTS

Obfuscators are protosapients that do not necessarily threaten icons but make the Matrix a difficult tool for legitimate users.

Cryppie

Autonomous Encryptor

The cryppie is a nomadic critter that munges encrypted archives. It travels among a limited number of nodes, usually between twenty and a hundred. As it wanders from node to node, it occasionally stops to encrypt a random file or loaded program. This results in its territory being littered with encrypted archives for the cryppie to munge at its leisure.

The cryppie's icon is reminiscent of a creature whose front half is a bird and whose back half is a fish, colored in purple to blue-green hues.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R	R+1	R	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R-3), Electronic Warfare (R-1), Hacking (R-1)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R-2), Attack (R-3), Defuse (R), Encrypt (R+2), Exploit (R)

Qualities: Datavore (Encrypted Archives), Sapper

Heisenbug

Disassembler

The heisenbug appears as a transparent fist-sized beetle with 233 legs. With its tendency to munge programs that are loaded but not running and interfere with normal node operations, the heisenbug is most often considered a pest.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R	R	R-2	R-1	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Data Search (R), Hacking (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R), Browse (R), Exploit (R), Stealth (R)

Qualities: Code Flux, Datavore (Loaded Programs), Real World Naiveté, Redundancy, Uncertainty

Kitteh

Kodephage

The kitteh is a predator that appears as a small sphere of a single color with a tail and feline features. Most of its behavior, from its bouncing movement to its coos and giggles of expression, is considered cute. Its endearing form makes it a popular pet, but its diet of running programs—including agents and other AIs—makes it potentially very dangerous.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R+2	R+1	R-1	R	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R-1), Attack (R), Browse (R+1), Disarm (R)

Qualities: Datavore (Running Programs), Codivore, Real World Naiveté

Netmare

Packet Dropper

The netmare grazes through the Matrix, mungeing error messages. It is a pest to all users and dreaded by telecommuters. It appears as a horse-shaped cloud with twenty-one legs and dark swirling colors.

CHA	INT	LOG	WIL	EDG	Matrix	Init	IP
R+1	R	R-1	R+1	R	INT + Response		3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R-1), Hacking (R), Intimidation (R-3)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R-1), Browse (R), Exploit (R), Stealth (R)

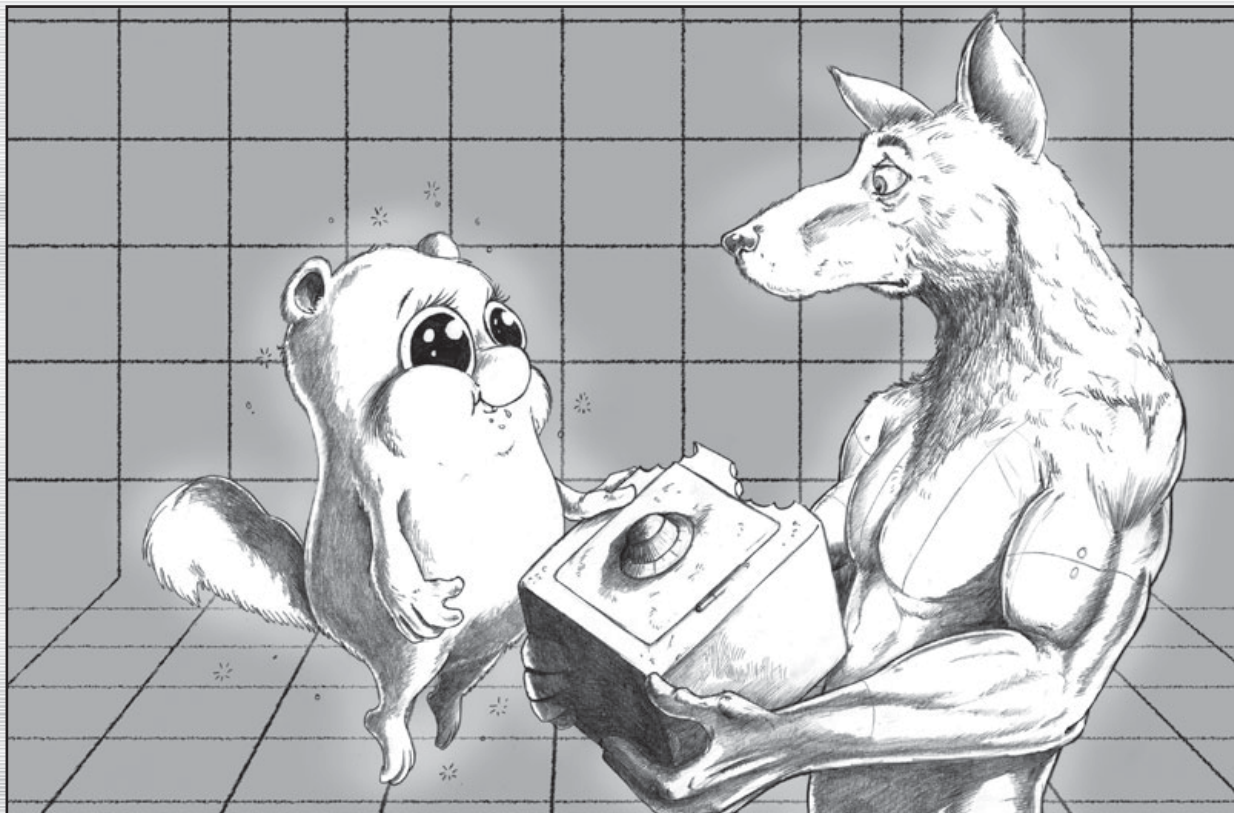
Qualities: Datavore (Error Messages), Improved Realignment, Intuitive Hacking (Attack), Nyetworking, Real World Naiveté, Uncertainty

Yantra

Yantra

The yantra is found most often in datastores and other file-rich nodes. It appears as a brain (usually black or white, but sometimes spotted with one color or the other) supported by fifty-five very short tentacles. It munges disarmed data bombs (not to be confused with the program Data Bomb, which sets them) and learns after mungeing enough of them to produce its own food.





INCOMING FEED.....



Hackers sometimes attempt to domesticate these feral AIs to assist in disarming stolen archives.

CHA INT **LOG** **WIL** **EDG** **Matrix Init** **IP**
R+1 R R R+1 R INT + Response 3

Skills: Computer (R), Data Search (R), Hacking (R-1)

Programs: Analyze (R+1), Armor (R+3), Browse (R), Cascading (R/2), Command (R), Corrupt (R), Data Bomb (R-4), Defuse (R), Exploit (R-2), Medic (R)

Qualities: Datavore (Defused Data Bombs), Real World Naiveté, Redundancy

ZOMBIES

Zombies are named for their behavior. Zombies come in sets of one master and a number of feral AIs spawned by that master. The master generates files that its spawn can munge, and the spawn find appropriate data for their master and transfer it to the master's node. Spawn AIs know only how to transfer files to adjacent nodes, so they must move files one hop at a time. They first transfer the file and then themselves to each node, gradually returning to their masters.

Only one zombie master can be found in any given local grid. When spawns of different masters meet, they engage in cybercombat. If spawns find another zombie master, they attack the foreign master, carrying it to a distant node if they successfully force it into realignment.

Zombie masters can move between nodes but seldom do of their own volition.

Green Man

Cunevore Spawn

The green man appears as a leafy face that is the color of its master money trie. It moves from node to node, seeking financial data for its master.

CHA INT **LOG** **WIL** **EDG** **Matrix Init** **IP**
R R R R R INT + Response 3

Skills: Computer (R), Cybercombat (R), Data Search (R+1), Hacking (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R+1), Attack (R), Browse (R), Exploit (R+1), Stealth (R), Track (R)

Qualities: Datavore (Money Trie Files), Fnord, POKer, Real World Naiveté, Sapper

Money Trie

Cunevore

The money trie's icon is a leafless uprooted tree with twenty-one roots and thirty-four branches. It appears to waver indistinctly between a sharp, translucent crystalline structure and a solid organic texture; color varies between individuals. It munges financial data, including electronic cash, funding transfers, letters of credit, and credstick data.

A money trie spawns green men.

CHA INT **LOG** **WIL** **EDG** **Matrix Init** **IP**
R+1 R R-1 R+1 R INT + Response 3

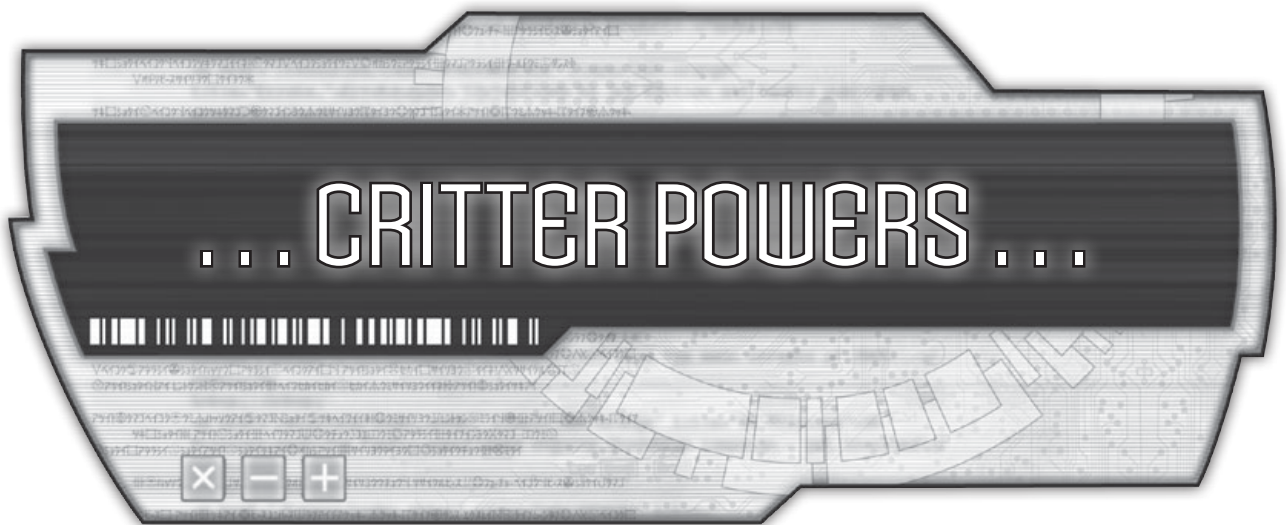
Skills: Computer (R)

Programs: Analyze (R), Armor (R+2), Edit (R), Reality Filter (R)

Qualities: Animator, Datavore (Financial Data), Real World Naiveté, Redundancy

PROTOSPIENTS





"GET OUT OF MY HEAD!!!!" Heads turned in his direction. Accusing eyes flashed fear, puzzlement and annoyance. A couple of hands shifted over the PANICBUTTONS on their 'links. People were becoming used to you having animated conversations with invisible people over a commlink's AR feed, but screaming like a madman in public was still guaranteed to draw attention.

Flamel turned onto a less-crowded back street. He caught his reflection in a shop window. Deep circles ringed his eyes and he looked drained and dog-tired. The tremors were back; he couldn't stop them even when he tried. How long had it been since he'd last slept? It wouldn't let him, yelling, singing and constantly chattering away to keep him awake. He leaned against a wall, cherishing the moment's respite.

Then, the oily voice was back. "No rest for the wicked. Feed me. I need more ..."

Flamel's legs gave out and he slid down the wall to the filthy sidewalk, "I can't. I've given you everything I have.

It continued relentlessly, "More!"

Flamel was on the verge of tears, "There's nothing left! Don't you understand?"

"I can give you power!" It promised.

"Fuck your power!" Flamel screamed back at the voice in his head. "I don't want anything that you have to offer! Haven't you done enough? Sandra, my reputation, my career, everything. You've taken everything from me, you little bastard, and all you do is demand more?" He took the necklace out from under his sweater and shifted his sight to the astral. As expected its single mocking eye stared back at him. "I'll do what I should have done long ago. Find someone who can remove you and free me."

Now its laughter echoed cruelly in his mind. "No, you won't!" Its tone so certain that it terrified him, "Idle threats. We've been down this path before. You will forget this as you have forgotten before, and we will continue our little dance until I am satisfied."



Powers are special abilities that critters possess as part of their physiology. Some powers are found in nature, such as claws or armor. Others, such as Concealment or Engulf, are magical.

The game mechanics given for the powers below are not intended as hard and fast rules, but as guidelines for the gamemaster. Players should never be absolutely certain of the capabilities of a critter, particularly Awakened ones. There is always a chance that a power may work slightly differently for one particular paracritter, especially one designated as a prime runner critter. Uncertainty is a wonderful dramatic tool.

Note that in order for a creature to use a power against a target, they must share the same “state:” astral or physical. Astral forms cannot affect physical targets, and vice versa (see *The Astral World*, p. 191, *SR4A*). Astral critters that materialize can affect physical targets, however, just as dual-natured critters can interact with both the physical and astral planes equally effectively.

Each power lists the power’s name, type, the action required to use it, and the power’s range. A description of the power and its effects follows.

Type: Powers may be either mana (M) or physical (P), just like spells (see p. 203, *SR4A*). Mana powers do not affect nonliving targets, whereas physical powers cannot be used in astral space or affect astral forms.

Actions: Powers require a Free, Simple, or Complex Action to activate, or they Automatically (“Auto”) function at all times with no attention from the critter. Auto actions require no action to activate, as they are always on.

Range: Powers may have a range of Line of Sight (LOS), Touch, or Self (indicating the power affects only the critter itself). The Line of Sight rules for spellcasting also apply for critter powers. Unless otherwise noted, a power may only be used on one target at a time.

Duration: Powers have a duration that indicates how long the effect lasts: Always, Instant, Sustained, Permanent, or Special.

Powers that are always in effect (have an Action of Automatic) have a duration of Always, as they are constantly “on.”

Instant powers take effect and vanish in the same action, though they may have lasting effects (damage, for example).

Sustained powers may be maintained over time at no effort or cost. Because these powers are innate, the critter is not subject to any strain or modifiers for keeping the effect going. Even taking damage will not disrupt these powers’ ability to sustain. Also, line of sight does not have to be maintained after the power takes hold of its target. Critters may sustain a number of powers equal to their Magic at one time.

Permanent powers must be maintained for a specific period of time before the effects become permanent, as noted in the power’s description.

Other powers may have a Special duration, meaning that the duration of the effect depends upon other factors, as noted in the description.

All critter powers can be divided into three classifications based on the source of the power: Paranormal, Emergent, and Mundane.

MUNDANE POWERS

Mundane powers are found in Mundane creatures and fully compatible with Paranormal and Emergent critters. Many

paracritters or technocritters will exhibit Mundane powers in addition to their special abilities. Mundane powers can be modified through genetic engineering, such as Warforms and Chimerics, or bred normally through natural selection and animal husbandry. These powers are unaffected by Background Count or Resonance Wells.

PARANORMAL POWERS

Caused by an expression on the metagene which allows metahumans to shape and wield magic, Paranormal powers are firmly in the realm of paracritters and impacted by the presence of a Background Count. A creature must have a Magic attribute of 1 or greater to use Paranormal powers. Paranormal and Emergent powers are mutually exclusive, and a creature can never have both abilities.

POWER BLEED

The adept metamagic technique Power Bleed allows a trained adept to rip the magic out of a critter and grants that ability to the adept. Power Bleed allows the transfer of only Paranormal powers. An adept cannot gain Mundane or Emergent powers through the use of this metamagic technique.

EMERGENT POWERS

Based on Resonance, Emergent powers allow a technocritter to mimic abilities of technomancers or sprites. These abilities are directly affected by Resonance Wells, adding or subtracting dice to tests the same way that a technomancer’s tests are affected.

MUNDANE POWERS

Adaptive Camouflage (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

Critters with Adaptive Camouflage are able to change their skin and fur tones to match the ambient colors around them. When not moving, the critter applies a –4 dice pool penalty to other creatures or characters looking for it. This penalty does not apply to non-visual Perception Tests. Additionally, critters with this power can roll an Agility + Intuition (2) Test. Net hits beyond the threshold will act as a positive dice pool modifier for Infiltration Tests.

Armor (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

The critter has an extremely tough hide that offers some protection from attacks. A critter with this power has a natural Armor rating that is cumulative with any external armor worn. Critter armor is divided into Ballistic and Impact components, the same as character armor.

Enhanced Senses (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

Enhanced Senses covers any improved or augmented senses beyond the normal human range of awareness. This includes low-light and thermographic vision, improved hearing and smell, heat-sensing organs, natural sonar, and so on.

CLEARING THE FOG

With changing circumstances and environmental modifiers come questions about the exact way that a critter power responds. Below are several rules clarifications and examples.

Background Count and Critter Powers

All Paranormal critter powers rely on magic, even if they are passive abilities and their descriptions do not reference the Magic attribute. These abilities are impacted by the changes in a critter's Magic attribute. Critter powers that directly reference the Magic attribute, such as Compulsion, use the modified rating. Other powers, such as Animal Control, are integral to the critter and may still be used as long as the critter still has a Magic attribute greater than 0.

If a creature's Magic drops to 0, all Paranormal powers are suppressed. In the case of permanent loss due to Magic loss or Essence damage, the powers are permanently lost when the creature burns out.

DUAL-NATURED

Several types of critters are dual-natured, allowing them to interact with the astral and physical planes equally. Because these creatures spend their entire lives in both realms, they do not suffer the -2 dice pool penalty that characters and critters using Astral Perception do. Dual-natured beings are able to focus on either plane and shift their perceptions as a Free Action. An example of this would be a hell hound which is watching astral space and shifts its perception back to the physical plane to sniff the air. Shifting back and forth at will allows dual-natured creatures to identify threats in either plane much more readily. Also, if a sense is damaged in the physical plane, a creature's ability to perceive in the astral is unhindered.

The downside to being dual-natured is that most critters cannot turn off their presence in the astral plane. This can be a hindrance when dealing with astral phenomena. Because they are always in the astral, barriers and wards are able to block off areas that would normally be accessible to non-astral critters. Dual-natured beings can force themselves through wards by forcing their physical body through the space. The critter rolls an Opposed Test of Charisma + Magic versus (Force x 2) of the barrier. If the critter wins the test, it passes through the barrier without problem. If the critter loses, it is disrupted, causing unconsciousness (p. 194, SR4A).

DUAL-NATURED MASKING

The auras of dual-natured and astrally perceiving creatures are always clearly visible on the astral plane. Masking is able to assist with hiding an astral form. By concentrating, any awakened character or critter with Masking can change the shape of an astral form. This is often done by

sapient critters masquerading as metahumans and metahumans in critter form.

ASTRAL COMBAT

When dual-natured critters engage astral forms in combat, they must use astral combat. Visually, it can appear that the critter is fighting invisible assailants, or the beast can grow eerily still as it thrusts its mind into the attacker. Presuming the critter does not have powers or spells to use on the astral, it engages with tooth, claw, and mind.

After Initiative is rolled, the dual-natured creature will attack on its action. Attacks are made using Willpower + Astral Combat. Damage can either be the physical damage that the critter would normally do with an unarmed attack or Charisma ÷ 2 (round up). Venom, disease, or other physical accompaniments to the critter's attacks are not used in astral combat.

Purely astral beings are capable of using the heightened speed available on the astral plane to break combat, though moving at the speed of thought is not viable in astral combat. The astral presence of the dual-natured individual is able to block an astral form, the same way that a physical body stops a physical person.

ENHANCED SENSES

Many enhanced senses provide additional senses that the creature did not have before. These senses are treated as natural, unaugmented senses when determining modifiers for Perception Tests. When a critter has enhanced senses for a sense that it would normally possess, such as Enhanced Hearing for a hell hound, it receives a +2 dice pool modifier to Perception Tests. An enhanced sense may also provide the critter with new uses for skills. Enhanced Scent, for example, allows a trained critter to track a person or prey by scent alone. Scent tracking uses Tracking + Intuition. Thresholds and dice pool modifiers are provided.

Enhanced senses include a wide spectrum of abilities throughout the animal kingdom. If the sense has not been described by one of the powers in this book, they can also be used to mimic cyberware implants or natural abilities of critters not covered. In these cases, gamemasters should determine the exact abilities and limitations of a specific sense when introducing it to the game.

MAGIC AND RESONANCE

As mentioned in Shadowrun, Fourth Edition, Magic and Resonance are mutually exclusive. A critter cannot have both abilities, and the corollary ability is prohibited once a specific ability has been expressed. This means that a critter which is normally Paranormal cannot become an Emergent critter even if its Magic is reduced to 0. Likewise, an adept who burns out her magic ability cannot become a technomancer.

Urgent Message...



CRITTER POWERS.....

Enhanced Sense—Thermosense (Mundane)

Critters with this power are able to see the lower end of the visual spectrum into infrared light and radiant heat output from nearby sources. This gives the critter natural Thermographic Vision.

Enhanced Sense—EM Sense (Mundane)

This sense allows critters possessing it to determine the presence or absence of electromagnetic fields nearby. A Perception + Intuition Test will detect nearby electronics, MAD scanners, and even the low electromagnetic fields put off by metahumans. This is usable to a maximum range of 1 meter.

Enhanced Sense—Direction Sense (Mundane)

The critter always knows the direction of magnetic north and can identify up to (Intuition) locations that it is always capable of discerning the general distance and direction to. This power enables homing pigeons to return home or migrating animals to find their way back to safe harbors.

Enhanced Sense – Echolocation (Mundane)

This power functions like Ultrasound, generating a picture of the surrounding area through the reflections of sound waves. Critters with this power generally emit a high-pitched frequency to hear the mapping of the area.

Gestalt Consciousness (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

Critters with a Gestalt Consciousness associate their minds with others of the same species to form social groups. Cyberpsychosis from cyber and bioware implantation has negative side effects on the group awareness of these social groups; all the critters in a specific population must have identical implants and enhancements. See *Swarms* (p. 25) for complete rules on *Swarms* and *Mischiefs*. Gestalt Consciousness cannot be applied to critters with the Sapience power.

Gills (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

A critter with Gills is able to breathe underwater without problem. If removed from the water, it may begin to suffocate (Holding your breath, p. 137, *SR4A*). Most critters with Gills are capable of breathing only in fresh water or salt water. Some rare critters are able to breathe both equally.

Natural Weapon (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Touch • Duration: Instant

The critter possesses some natural form of weaponry capable of inflicting Physical damage, such as claws, sharp teeth, or a stinger. The description of this power describes the nature of the attack as well as its Damage Value and Armor Penetration modifiers, where applicable. Natural Weapon may be either melee weapons or ranged weapons, and critters follow the standard rules of combat when using them. Critters use the Unarmed Combat skill to attack with natural melee weapons and the Exotic Ranged Weapon skill to attack with natural ranged weapons.

SCENT TRACKING

Range	Threshold
In the area (30 meters)	1
Recently in the area (less than an hour)	2
In the area within the last 12 hours	3
In the area within the last two days	4

Situation	Dice Pool Modifiers
Target has strong odor (perfume, cigar, unwashed, etc.)	+2
Target has Tailored Pheromones	+Rating
Tracker has Enhanced Pheromone Receptors	+Rating
Target has Clean Metabolism	-2
Crowded area	-2
Rain or Snowfall since Target passed area	-4
Pungent ambient smell	-2

Critters without a Natural Weapon may still make an unarmed attack. As with regular characters, the Damage Value is (STR÷2)S.

Pestilence (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Touch • Duration: Instant

The critter carries a natural (non-magical) contagious bacterial infection or virus that may infect characters who come into contact with it (or its secretions). Treat this disease as a toxin (p. 254, *SR4A*) with the following attributes: Vector: Contact, Speed: 1 Day, Power: 8, Effect: Stun Damage, Disorientation, Nausea. Unlike toxins, disease effects last for 1 full day.

Each day, the disease Power decreases by 2, and the character must make another Resistance Test until the Power is reduced to 0. Note that some critters may carry diseases with different attributes, as noted in the individual descriptions.

Sapience (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

Critters with the Sapience power are self-aware with a choice-making consciousness. Sapient critters are considered Untrained (see p. 119, *SR4A*) in any skills they do not possess and can default normally. Sapient critters are also capable of learning new skills. Critters with this power cannot have the Gestalt Consciousness power.

While all sapient critters are paranormal (with the exception of digital critters such as AIs and Sprites), some in their species are capable of Awakening, by acquiring one of the Awakened qualities (such as Adept or Magician) and possessing a Magic attribute. Such sapient critters are capable of all of the magical tasks and abilities associated with their relevant quality. They follow the same rules for magic as normal characters.



INCOMING FEED.....



Substance Extrusion (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

There are several natural substances that a critter is capable of naturally extruding. Critters with the Substance Extrusion power have one of the examples listed below. Gamemasters can feel free to include additional substances that fit a critter. The glands that develop the substance can be triggered in two ways:

Exhalation Spray: Growing in the neck above the larynx or beneath the tail, this gland is equipped with sphincters. When triggered via an instinctive reflex, the sphincters open and the compound is exhaled, much like an aerosol. In game terms, the critter exhales the compound in a cone that extends out to one-half its Body attribute in meters, and the compound can catch up to two targets that are within one meter of each other. Use the Speed, Power, Effect, and Vector of the compound (only compounds with contact or inhalation vectors can be used in this manner). The critter can exhale up to the amount of doses stored in the gland.

Spit: Growing along the jawbone or upper neck, the gland collects mucus in a reservoir sac. If the compound is not a liquid, it is dissolved in mucus to be applied with this method. When squeezed, the sac ejects the compound, and the critter spits it out its mouth. To strike an intended target, the critter rolls a ranged attack using Exotic Ranged Weapon + Agility with a range of (Body) meters. Use the normal Speed, Power, and Effect of the compound to determine effect. Only a single dose may be spat per use.

Substance Extrusion-Ink (Mundane)

Designed to blind a target, the creature extrudes a dark viscous substance which applies a penalty to all Perception (Visual) Tests equal to the Body of the creature extruding it. The ink will permanently stain most porous items and clothing.

Substance Extrusion-Skunk Fluid (Mundane)

A potent and nauseating liquid, skunk fluid is an irritant that affects the skin, eyes, and mucus membranes. In addition to the basic effects, creatures struck by skunk fluid will carry the odor with them for (Body) weeks. Enzymes can be used to diminish the scent reducing the time from (Body) weeks to (Body) hours. (50 nuyen per use).

Vector: Contact/Inhalation

Speed: Immediate

Penetration: 0

Power: 6

Effect: Disorientation, Stun Damage, Nausea

Substance Extrusion-Spider silk (Mundane)

This power gives the critter a natural gland for producing spider silk and the spinnerets to weave it. The spider silk is very strong relative to the creature that produced it. It can hold up to twice the weight of the creature that spins it. A web spun of spider silk is difficult to see, applying a -2 modifier to Perception Tests to notice it. The web is capable of entangling a victim with a Body equal to the Body of the creature that spun it.

CRITTER POWERS.....

Venom (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Touch • Duration: Instant

The critter secretes natural venom that is poisonous to characters and other critters. Treat it as toxin (see p. 254, *SR4A*) with the following attributes: Vector: Injection, Speed: 1 Combat Turn, Power: 6, Effect: Physical Damage. Note that some critters may have toxins with different attributes, as noted in their individual descriptions.

Wall Walking (Mundane)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

Critters with this power can move at their normal movement rate while walking on vertical surfaces and even while upside down, as when walking across the ceiling. No Climbing Tests are necessary, though Climbing may be used in place of Running to increase speed for Sprinting Tests. A critter can be knocked off the wall or ceiling through normal knockdown rules, though the attacker must intentionally strike the critter away from the surface they are moving on.

PARANORMAL POWERS

Accident (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Instant

This power allows the being to cause a seemingly normal accident to occur. The nature of the accident is up to the gamemaster, based on the circumstances and surrounding environment.

When a character is targeted with the Accident power, make an Opposed Test between the critter's Magic + Willpower and the character's Reaction + Intuition. If the critter wins, the character suffers an accident determined by the gamemaster. Possibilities include: he trips, gets a mouthful of leaves, bangs his knee painfully, drops something, or suffers a brain fart and ejects the clip out of his gun. Accident isn't dangerous in itself, but the environment can make it so. Tripping on a narrow mountain ledge, for example, can be most unfortunate. If the critter scored 4+ net successes, treat the accident as a critical glitch—the accident is not just a fumble, it's a major mishap.

If a critter uses Accident against a vehicle, it can force the driver to make a Crash Test. The critter's Magic attribute serves as a negative dice pool modifier to the test.

Adaptive Coloration (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

The Adaptive Coloration power allows a creature to refract light around itself and thus become nearly invisible. When the creature remains immobile, there is a -6 dice pool modifier for Perception tests to detect it by sight; when the creature is moving, the dice pool modifier drops to -4. Because this power affects the depth perception of onlookers, add an additional -2 dice pool modifier to any ranged attack against the creature.

This power works against natural and augmented thermographic vision but has no effect against nonvisual senses such as sonar, radar, scent tracking, or astral perception. However, some creatures may have a version of this power that affects a wider range of senses.

Anaphylaxis (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Touch • Duration: Instant

Anaphylaxis is a massive systemic allergic reaction magically induced by a concentrated burst of pollutants from the toxic spirit.

Treat it as an inhalation vector toxin attack (Speed: Immediate; Power: Force; Effect: Physical Damage, Anaphylactic Shock). Armor does not help resist this damage, but gear that protects against inhalation-vector toxins will (see the Toxin Protection Table, p. 254, *SR4A*).

Anaphylactic Shock: If the damage is not completely resisted, the victim enters anaphylactic shock, resulting in muscle spasms and systemic failure resulting in death if untreated. The victim takes 1 box of damage each Combat Turn until he dies from cardiovascular breakdown, unless he is treaded by a First Aid + Logic (2) Test with appropriate drugs (i.e. a medkit) or an Antidote, Detox, or Heal spell.

Animal Control (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

Some beings can mentally manipulate particular types of Mundane critters. This power allows the being to direct the behavior of a critter or group of critters. This behavior must fall within what is normal for the critter. For example, a controlled monkey could not drive a car, but it could be ordered to climb a tree and retrieve something, attack, sit quietly, or follow someone. Critters may not be commanded if they leave line of sight, but they will continue to fulfill any orders they were given. The being may control a number of small critters (cats, rats, etc.) equal to its Charisma x 5 or a number of larger critters (wolves, lions, bears, etc.) equal to its Charisma. This power may not be used on any critter with the Sapience power or Paranormal and Emergent critters.

Astral Form (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

A critter with the Astral Form power exists in the astral plane only. It cannot be damaged by physical attacks or physical spells; only astral attacks or mana spells may hurt an astral critter. Likewise, an astral critter cannot affect other creatures in the material world, only dual-natured creatures or astrally perceiving characters.

Critters with this power may manifest on the physical plane in the same way as astrally projecting magicians can (p. 193, *SR4A*).

Aura Masking (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Sustained

This power functions as both the initiate powers Masking (p. 198, *SR4A*) and Extended Masking (p. 60, *Street Magic*). The spirit uses its Edge in place of initiate grade. The spirit can also hide the use of any of its powers on itself within the masked aura. Only characters who pierce the masking can see the spirit's use of spirit powers on itself. A spirit can always attempt to appear as another form of astral creature (even if not capable of astral projection), but masking itself as Mundane would be entirely pointless unless it is joined to a physical body or has the realistic form power.

Banishing Resistance (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Special

For purposes of resisting banishment (see Banishing, p. 188, *SR4A*), treat the spirit as if it has a number of services equal to its Edge that refresh every sunrise and sunset—these are cumulative with any services the spirit may actually owe a conjurer.

Binding (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Instant

The critter can make its victim “stick” to any surface he is touching (or to the being itself). The victim may attempt to break free with a Complex Action, rolling Strength + Body against the critter’s Magic + Willpower. If the victim prevails, he has escaped.

Compulsion (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

A being with the Compulsion power can compel a target to perform a specific action (generally, each creature can compel only one type of action). To use this power, the critter must beat the target in an Opposed Test of its Magic + Charisma versus the target’s Willpower + Charisma. If the victim loses, he must immediately follow through with the compelled action. Compulsion cannot compel a target’s future actions.

Concealment (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Simple • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

This power refers to a critter’s ability to mystically hide itself or others, or alternatively to hide something that people are looking for. Concealment subtracts a number of dice equal to the critter’s Magic from any Perception Tests to locate the concealed subject. Concealment can be used on a number of targets simultaneously equal to the critter’s Magic; concealed subjects can see each other if the critter allows it.

Confusion (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

The Confusion power allows a critter to befuddle a victim so that the target is unable to make decisions, remember what he was doing, maintain a sense of direction, and so on. The critter makes a Magic + Willpower Opposed Test versus the target’s Willpower. The net hits scored by the critter serve as a negative dice pool modifier to any action the character takes.

Control Focus (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Special • Duration: Special

This power enables the spirit to activate or deactivate a focus they are possessing at will. For instance, the spirit may surreptitiously activate the focus, rendering it dual-natured to then use its powers on the physical plane. Furthermore, spirits can control the flow of mana through the possessed enchantment, temporarily limiting the focus’s Force by any number of points up to the spirit’s Magic rating. If it so wishes, the spirit may even lend its power to the focus, adding half its Magic (round down) to the focus’s Force for (Spirit’s Force) Turns per day. Spirits often use this latter ability to bargain for Karma if their victim refuses to “cooperate”.

A Force 3 Imp possessing a Force 5 power focus can reduce the focus’s Force to 2 (5–3). He could, however, also choose to lower the Force only to 4 or 3. If the same Force 3 Imp would possess a magical lodge, he could lower the Force 4 Magical Lodge to a minimum of 1 (4–3). If a sustaining or anchoring focus is reduced in this manner, any spell maintained is reduced in Force.

Corrosive Secretions (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

Creatures with the Corrosive Secretions power ooze a corrosive substance from their skin, equivalent to an acid (see *Acids and Alkalis*, p. 80, *Arsenal*) with a rating equal to the critter’s Essence; this damage affects anything or anyone that touches or is touched by the creature. The creature is immune to its own corrosive secretions.

Corrosive Spit (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Special

This creature spits corrosive saliva at opponents with range increments of (Body) meters. Treat this as a standard ranged combat attack using the critter’s Exotic Ranged Weapon skill + Agility. The saliva causes Acid damage (p. 163, *SR4A*) with DV equal to Magic and is resisted with half Impact armor (round up).

Deathly Aura (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Simple • Range: Special • Duration: Sustained

The spirit exhibits an aura of primordial fear and decay that taints the surrounding environment. For an area with a radius of (Force) meters around the spirit, the temperature drops by twice the spirit’s Force in degrees centigrade. Furthermore, organic materials decay at an accelerated rate (aging by a factor equal to the spirit’s Force). This decay is not fast enough to noticeably damage large creatures like metahumans or most critters, but it withers plants and is lethal to insects and small animals like mice. Living creatures are struck by unreasoning terror and must succeed in an Opposed Test between their Charisma + Willpower and the spirit’s Force x 2 in order to bring themselves to enter such an area voluntarily.

Desire Reflection (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

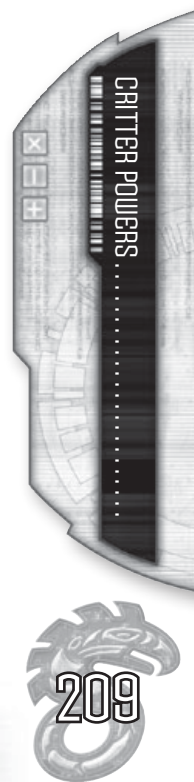
Desire Reflection enables the spirit or critter to discover the greatest desire of a single target within its line of site and evoke a full-sensory illusion keyed to the desire in the target’s mind. Certain spirits make use of this power to draw in potential new victims. The spirit itself can appear as a harmless or pleasing aspect of the illusion at will. To use this power the critter must succeed in an Opposed Test pitting its Magic + Intuition against the target’s Willpower + Intuition. If it scores more net hits, the victim is deceived by the illusion. Otherwise the power fails to affect the victim.

Left to their own devices, victims indulge themselves as if their secret desire were coming true. If the victim is attacked, injured, or slapped in the face, he may make another Opposed Test to resist the illusion (similar to resisting Mental Manipulations, see p. 210, *SR4A*). Each hit reduces the spirit’s net hits on the original Opposed Test. If these hits are reduced to 0, the victim can break free of the illusion. Those who fail are lost and entranced, caught between illusion and reality.

Devouring (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Touch • Duration: Sustained

Insect spirits use the Devouring power to voraciously consume all biomaterial (e.g. crops, wood, vegetation) and most non-living objects in an area. Some flesh and hybrid-form insect spirits actually seem to derive sustenance from this consumption, whereas others regurgitate the material and use it construct



parts of their hive. The spirit makes a Force x 2 Test against the Object Resistance threshold (p. 183, *SR4A*) of all possible material/objects within (Magic) meters. If the hits exceed the Object Resistance, the object is affected and devoured.

Barriers lose 1 point of Structure rating and vehicles take 1 box of damage per round the power is sustained. Living critters and characters are unaffected. Locust spirits use this power to strip the land of anything remotely edible.

Divining (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Special • Range: Special • Duration: Special

This power functions like Divining metamagic (p. 56, *Street Magic*), though the spirit uses Magic + Intuition rather than Arcana to divine meaning.

Dragonspeech (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Auto • Range: LOS • Duration: Instant

Dragons are incapable of vocal speech, but they are able to communicate telepathically with other beings in their line of sight through Dragonspeech. This telepathic communication, or dragonspeech, can't be picked up by microphones or technology, so dragons wishing to communicate through modern technology must employ a human or metahuman as "translator."

Dual Natured (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

A critter that is dual-natured is active in the astral plane and can affect astral beings as well as physical ones. Dual-natured creatures have the ability to perceive and interact with the astral plane in the same way as characters using astral perception (Astral Perception, p. 191, *SR4A*). Characters and critters with this power do not suffer the usual -2 dice pool modifier for interacting with the physical world while astrally perceiving.

Elemental Attack (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Instant

A critter with Elemental Attack can release a projected blast of damaging or negative energy, be it flame, intense cold, electricity, water, or so on. The power is treated as a ranged attack (Ranged Combat, p. 150, *SR4A*) using the critter's Agility + Exotic Ranged Weapon skill to attack. The attack's Damage Value equals the critter's Magic and is treated as Cold, Electricity, or Fire damage (p. 163, *SR4A*), as appropriate to the attack. Such attacks are resisted with half Impact armor. The type of elemental attack used by a spirit is appropriate to its element and chosen at the time of its summoning; once chosen, it cannot be changed.

Empathy (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

Empathy allows a creature to recognize the dominant emotions and moods of a target. The being can also project an emotional state of its choice onto the target. Establishing this empathic link requires an Opposed Test between the creature's Charisma + Magic against the target's Willpower + Counterspelling (if any). If the creature generates more successes, it can sense the target's emotions and project emotions onto the target in the same way as the control emotion spell (p. 210, *SR4A*).

Energy Aura (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Touch • Duration: Always

A critter with Energy Aura continuously radiates an aura of damaging or negative energy, be it flame, intense cold, electricity, or something similar. Melee attacks made by the critter gain an additional +4 modifier to the Damage Value. Additionally, treat the damage as Cold, Electricity, or Fire damage (p. 163, *SR4A*), as appropriate to the aura. Such attacks are resisted with half Impact armor.

Any successful attack against a critter with Energy Aura means the attacker also takes damage from the attack. The attacker must make a Damage Resistance Test against a Damage Value equal to the critter's Magic. Impact armor protects with half its value.

Energy Drain (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: Touch or LOS • Duration: Permanent

The Energy Drain power is used by a number of dangerous critters and spirits in different ways. Each version of this power is slightly different, depending on the entity using it. All versions entail the creature using this power to suck life energy from a victim, in the form of Karma, Force, Magic, or Essence. The Essence Drain power used by vampires is a variant of this power. For some creatures (blood spirits, shedim, mantid spirits), this power is Touch range, meaning a resisting victim must somehow be subdued first or drained unwittingly (as FAB does). For other beings (shadow spirits), this power merely requires line of sight, allowing the critter to feed off its victims from afar.

Draining a point of Karma, Force, Magic, or Essence requires a Willpower + Magic (10 - target's Essence/Force, 1 minute) Extended Test (for some critters, the interval may differ, as specifically noted). If the critter is disturbed or interrupted before this test ends, the point is not drained. If the Extended Test is completed, the critter drains one point of the specified energy, adding to its own. (In some cases, the energy is converted to an appropriate rating point at a 1:1 ratio, as noted; for example, blood spirits convert drained Essence to Force.)

Some critters (FAB, mantid spirits), used the drained energy to reproduce, as noted in their individual descriptions. Drained points are permanently lost. Living victims find this process draining at best, extremely painful at worst. Victims suffer 1 box of damage for each point drained. Depending on the critter, this may be Stun damage (shadow spirits, FAB) or Physical damage (blood spirits, shedim). Victims who take Physical damage appear drained, withered, and hollow, and are sometimes marked permanently (white hair, hair loss, wrinkles, premature aging, or other strange markings).

If a character's Magic is reduced to 0, he burns out and becomes mundane. If a critter's Magic is reduced to 0, it dies. If a spirit, sustained/anchored/quicken spell, focus, or mana barrier's Force is reduced to 0, it is destroyed. If a victim's Essence is reduced to 0, he dies.

Engulf (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Touch • Duration: Sustained

The Engulf power gives a critter the ability to draw victims into itself or the terrain it controls, thus smothering the victim. Treat Engulf as a melee attack. If the attack succeeds, it inflicts damage (see below) and the critter engulfs the victim in its grasp.



COMING FEED.....

Every time the critter's Action Phase comes up, the critter automatically inflicts damage with a base Damage Value equal to its Magic attribute. Net hits on the melee attack increase the Damage Value of this damage. The victim resists this damage normally with a Damage Resistance Test, using Body + half Impact armor (round up) unless otherwise noted.

Engulfed victims may not move. During the victim's Action Phase, the victim may attempt to escape. Make an Opposed Test, rolling the victim's Strength + Body against the critter's Magic + Body. If the victim prevails, then he has escaped and takes no more damage from the attack.

The secondary effects of some engulfing attacks are described as follows:

Air Engulf: The victim resists Stun as if from an inhalation-vector toxin attack (p. 254, *SR4A*). Armor does not protect against this attack, but other protective gear might (Toxin Protection table, p. 254, *SR4A*). If the victim passes out from Stun damage, he will continue to take damage, with the Stun damage overflowing into Physical damage as normal.

Earth Engulf: The victim resists Physical damage.

Fire Engulf: The victim resists Fire damage (p. 163, *SR4A*).

Guidance: The victim is wracked by nightmares, visions, and madness, suffering Stun damage. The damage is resisted with Willpower instead of Body, and armor is ignored.

Plant: The victim is entwined in vines, branches, or thorns, suffering Stun damage.

Water Engulf: The victim resists Stun damage. This is rougher than normal drowning, because the critter is capable of exerting great pressure on the victim. Victims who pass out from Stun

damage continue to take damage after falling unconscious, with the Stun damage overflowing into Physical damage as normal.

Essence Drain (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Touch • Duration: Permanent

The Essence Drain power allows a being to drain the Essence from another character, adding drained Essence to the critter's own. Essence Drain can only target physical sentient beings (characters and non-astral critters with the Sentience power).

The critter cannot drain from a resisting victim; the victim must either participate willingly, or be subdued into helplessness (restrained, paralyzed, knocked unconscious, mentally controlled, etc). Essence transfer only occurs in the presence of strong emotion. This can be a lover's passion, the terror of an unwilling victim, or the rage of a defeated enemy, for example. The emotions must be strong, and they must be focused personally on the critter using the power. Sometimes the transfer of a token amount of physical material takes place, such as blood for a vampire or flesh for a wendigo, though this usually serves to enhance the passion or terror of the moment.

Draining a point of Essence takes a Charisma + Magic (10 – target's Essence, 1 minute) Extended Test. If the critter is disturbed or interrupted before this test ends, the Essence point is not drained. The critter may drain as many points of Essence as it currently possesses, with a minimum of 1 point. A critter can only increase its Essence to twice its natural maximum.

Lost Essence will affect a character's Magic or Resonance rating (p. 177, *SR4A*). If character's Essence is drained to 0, the character dies.

The psychic stimulus of the act of draining has a side effect of creating ecstasy in the victim. A victim being drained must make a Willpower (2) Test. Failure indicates addiction, causing the subject to seek out the creature for another “rush.” Treat this as a Mild Addiction negative quality (p. 93, *SR4A*). This will, of course, lead to a rapid loss of Essence and eventual death if the character is not restrained or does not “kick the habit.”

If pressed, a critter that has drained Essence within the past hour can siphon the stolen life force into other attributes, including (and often especially) Magic. Every 2 points of drained Essence temporarily boosts one Physical or Mental attribute, or Magic, by +1. Only one attribute may be boosted at any time. This attribute boost wears off after 12 hours, and half the Essence points used to fuel the boost are lost.

Fear (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Special

The Fear power gives a being the power to fill its victims with overwhelming terror. The victim will race in panic for the nearest point of apparent safety, and will not stop until he is out of sight and a safe distance away. The critter makes a Willpower + Magic Opposed Test against the target's Willpower. The terror lasts for 1 Combat Turn per net hit scored by the critter. Even after that point, the target must succeed in a Willpower + Charisma (critter's net hits) Test to return or face the critter again.

Fey Glamour (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: Special • Duration: Sustained

The Fey Glamour power allows a creature to alter the perceptions of beings within his sphere of influence, causing intruders to see terrain as whatever the creature wishes. Thus, a victim can see a swamp as solid ground, rusting metal pillars as verdant trees, or a gaping abyss as a shallow river spanned by a solid stone bridge. All sensory input will fit the illusion or be ignored by the victim, including shouts from friends, warning beeps from detection devices, and even astral perception.

The Fey Glamour power affects all beings within the spirit's sphere of influence (Magic x 50 meters). To overcome the effects of the power, the victim must achieve more hits on a Willpower + Counterspelling (if any) Resistance Test than the creature achieved on its Charisma + Magic Success Test when crafting the illusion.

Most creatures use the Fey Glamour power to protect their terrain against intruders and lead them astray or use it to hide its true appearance from its surroundings.

Guard (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

The Guard power gives the critter the ability to prevent normal environmental accidents and hazards (both natural and those induced by the Accident power), such as preventing someone from succumbing to heatstroke or saving someone from drowning. The Guard power can also be used to prevent a glitch from occurring. Guard may be used on a number of characters at once equal to the critter's Magic attribute.

Hardened Armor (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

Hardened Armor is even tougher than normal armor. If the modified Damage Value of an attack does not exceed the Hardened Armor rating (modified by Armor Penetration), then it bounces harmlessly off the critter; don't even bother to make a Damage Resistance Test. Otherwise, Hardened Armor provides both Ballistic and Impact armor equal to its rating.

Hidden Life (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Touch • Duration: Permanent

With this power, the spirit permanently places its life force in some creature, place, or object. As long as the hiding place remains safe, the spirit cannot be permanently banished or destroyed by any means. The spirit is able to return after a year and a day even if banished with its spirit formula, but a character holding the formula can attempt to call and command the spirit.

The hiding place gains the powers of Immunity to Normal Weapons (with a Magic equal to the spirit's), and Immunity to Age. If the hidden life holder is destroyed, the life force returns to the spirit, and the spirit is treated normally.

Immunity (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

A critter with Immunity has an enhanced resistance to a certain type of attack or affliction. The critter gains an “Armor rating” equal to twice its Magic against that damage. This Immunity Armor is treated as “hardened” protection (see Hardened Armor above), meaning that if the Damage Value does not exceed the Armor, then the attack automatically does no damage.

Immunity to Age: Some beings possess immunity to aging. These beings neither age nor suffer the effects of aging.

Immunity to Normal Weapons: This immunity applies to all weapons that are not magical (weapon foci, spells, adept or critter powers). If the critter has the Allergy weakness, then the Immunity does not apply against non-magical attacks made using the allergen.

Immunity to Pathogens/Toxins: Creatures with this power gain bonus dice equal to twice their Magic on Disease Resistance Tests or Toxin Resistance Tests as applicable.

Infection (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Touch • Duration: Permanent

The Infection power allows a critter with Essence Drain to infect any suitable creature it has drained to 0 Essence with the strain of the HMMVV virus it is carrying. To see if a victim is infected, make an Opposed Test, rolling the critter's Magic + Charisma against the victim's Body + Willpower. If the critter wins, the victim is infected. The victim enters into a state of near-death, as the infection initiates physical, mental, and spiritual transformation. Within 24 hours the newly-created critter revives at 1 Essence and must immediately drain Essence from another being.

Player characters transformed through the Infection power automatically become NPCs upon their “death” and are controlled by the gamemaster from that point forward.

Influence (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Instant

The Influence power allows a being to insinuate suggestions into a target's mind, predisposing that person to some form of action, reaction, or emotion. Make an Opposed Test between the being's Magic + Charisma and the target's Willpower. If successful, the target will carry out the suggestion. If confronted with the wrongness of the suggestion, the subject can make a Willpower Test to overcome it. (*Mental Manipulations*, p. 210, SR4A)

Innate Spell (Paranormal)

Type: as spell • Action: Complex • Range: per spell • Dur: per spell

A creature with the Innate Spell power has the instinctive ability to cast one spell. The critter must possess the Spellcasting skill in order to use the power effectively. Innate Spells cast by a critter are the same as those cast by magicians, and magicians can use Counterspelling against them as normal. Innate spells produce Drain as normal. Critters and spirits resist Drain with either Intuition or Charisma (at the gamemaster's discretion).

Magic Sense (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Auto • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

A critter with the Magic Sense power can sense the presence of magic within (Magic x 10) meters. Whenever active foci, spells, mana barriers, dual-natured beings, or mana anomalies come within the range, it will be aware of the presence but not know any details; dual-natured critters with this power will also detect astral forms.

Magical Guard (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Free • Range: LOS • Duration: Instant

A critter with the Magical Guard power can use the Counterspelling skill and provide spell defense and dispel spells the same as a magician can (p. 185, SR4A).

Materialization (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Self • Duration: Sustained

Certain astral critters are capable of projecting themselves into the material world, thus allowing them to interact with physical beings. When materialized, critters may affect physical targets. Additionally, materialized critters gain Immunity to Normal Weapons.

Metahuman Form (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Self • Duration: Sustained

Great dragons (and only great dragons) acquire the power of Metahuman Form. With a Complex Action, the dragon can assume a metahuman form of its choice, with physical abilities equal to those of a normal metahuman of the chosen race. Great dragons tend to be reluctant to assume metahuman form, because it leaves them somewhat vulnerable (compared to their powerful natural form). Dragons usually have various magical defenses in place to protect them in metahuman form, so that a surprise attack doesn't destroy them before they can resume their true form. Returning to true form is also a Complex Action.

Lesser dragons are capable of using magic to assume metahuman forms, but it is not an innate ability. (This means that the

magic must be sustained, maintained by a sustaining focus, or something similar.)

Mimicry (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Simple • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

The Mimicry power allows a creature to imitate a wide variety of sounds, including speech and the hunting calls of other creatures. The Perception Test threshold to determine that the sound is false equals the hits scored by the critter with a Charisma + Magic Test.

Mind Link (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Simple • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

A critter with the Mind Link power can open and maintain telepathic mental communication with another sapient creature. The spirit can maintain a number of mental links at one time equal to its Magic attribute. If multiple sapients are engaged via Mind Link with the same spirit, they may communicate freely with each other as well as the original spirit.

Mist Form (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Self • Duration: Sustained

The being can use the Mist Form power to magically transform its body into mist. The mist has a Movement rate of 5 meters per Combat Turn and can pass through any crack or crevice that is not airtight. Systems that are proof against gases, bacteria, or viral infiltration will stop a being in mist form. While in mist form, the being has Immunity to Normal Weapons but is vulnerable to strong winds, which may disrupt the mist and disorient the being. If the being is exposed to a substance to which it is allergic, it is immediately forced back into its normal form. Shifting into or out of mist form requires a Complex Action.

Movement (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

The critter may increase or decrease the subject's movement rate within the terrain it controls. Multiply or divide the target's movement rate by the critter's Magic.

This power has its limits. If the Body of the target exceeds the critter's Magic, reduce the Movement multiplier by half. If the Body of the target exceeds Magic x 2 then Movement has no effect.

Mutable Form (Paranormal)

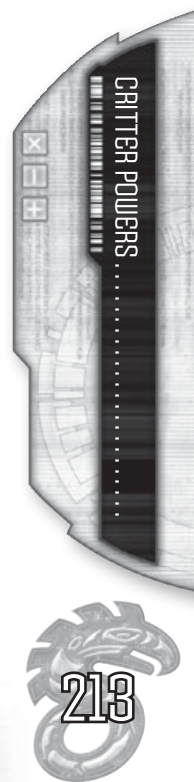
Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Special

Spirits normally materialize using the same form every time. A free spirit with Mutable Form can appear differently each time it materializes. The spirit's magical aura is unchanged. If the spirit also has the Realistic Form power (p. 102, *Street Magic*), add the spirit's Force to any Disguise Tests it makes to impersonate someone. This power is only available to spirits with the Materialization power.

Mutagen (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Self • Duration: Sustained

A being can use the Mutagen power to magically enhance its physical body at the expense of its mental abilities. While using the power, it can shift up to a maximum of (Magic) attribute points from Mental to Physical attributes. This power can be used by possessing spirits, shifting Mental attribute points from the spirit



to the vessel's Physical attributes. Shifting into or out of a mutated form requires a Complex Action. At the gamemaster's discretion, instead of shifting attribute points this power can instead be used to generate a new physical feature, such as a horn, a tail, or a new sensory organ.

Mystic Armor (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

Critters with Mystic Armor have natural protection from astral attacks. Apply the critter's Mystic Armor rating against any astral attacks that strike it. Some critters may also have hardened Mystic Armor (if they also have the Hardened Armor power).

Noxious Breath (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Special • Duration: Instant

The critter can project a nauseating stench to incapacitate victims. Treat it as an inhalation vector toxin attack (Speed: Immediate, Power: Critter's Magic, Effect: Stun damage, Nausea; see p. 254, *SR4A*). Armor does not help resist this damage, but respiratory protection will (see Toxin Protection Table, p. 254, *SR4A*). This blast of breath extends in a cone out to (Body) meters, and can catch up to two targets who are within one meter of each other.

Paralyzing Howl (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Special • Duration: Special

This power affects everyone (friend or foe) able to hear it. The creature makes an Opposed Test using its Magic + Charisma against the target's Willpower. Apply a dice pool modifier against the critter equal to the rating of any sound dampening device or hits scored by Hush/Silence spells. If the critter wins, each net hit reduces the target's Reaction for (Magic) minutes (this also affects Initiative). If Reaction is reduced to 0, the character is paralyzed and cannot move (except to breathe). After the paralysis ends, Reaction returns at the rate of 1 point per minute.

Paralyzing Touch (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Touch • Duration: Special

This is a Touch-range version of the Paralyzing Howl power. The critter must touch the target (requiring a successful unarmed attack, which causes no damage).

Personal Domain (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Auto • Range: LOS • Duration: Permanent

The spirit literally leaves its personal mark all over a portion of the astral plane up to 10,000 square meters per Force point. Over time, this area accumulates a background count aspected towards the tradition the spirit represents (p. 117, *Street Magic*). The gamemaster determines how quickly the background accumulates, but the process should take months if not years, and the background count should not exceed the spirit's Force ÷ 2 (round up).

Petrification (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

Critters with the deadly Petrification power can harden flesh into thick stone with a glance. For every net hit on an Opposed Test between the critter's Magic + Willpower and

the target's Body, the target takes a temporary -1 to Agility and Reaction. When a target's Agility and Reaction are both reduced to zero, the target is turned to stone. If the critter's Magic rating is higher than the target's (augmented) Body, the change can be made permanent.

While turned to stone, the victim has a barrier Armor rating equal to the critter's Magic.

Phasing (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Self • Duration: Sustained

Creatures with the Phasing power have the ability to physically pass through solid earth with a movement rate equal to their walking rate. Note that the ability only affects movement; natural earth still serves as an astral barrier for spells and determining line of sight. Phasing has no effect on artificial substances such as brick or concrete.

Possession (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Touch • Duration: Special

Some spirits lack the ability to materialize, so they must possess vessels in order to interact with the physical plane. Each possession attempt requires a Complex Action in which the spirit touches the vessel's aura and then accesses the physical plane and attempts to possess a vessel so that it may stay there. The spirit makes an Opposed Test pitting its Force x 2 against the vessel's Intuition + Willpower Test (for living vessels). For inanimate vessels, the spirit makes a Force x 2 (vessel's Object Resistance) Test. Apply a +6 dice pool bonus to the spirit if the vessel has been previously prepared (Vessel Preparation, p. 86, *Street Magic*). If the test fails, the spirit is immediately forced back into the astral plane. If the test succeeds, the possession takes hold: the vessel and the critter are considered a single dual-natured entity for the duration. For the detailed effects of Possession, refer to the Possession and Vessels sidebar (p. 102, *Street Magic*).

A possessing spirit may be ejected from the vessel into the astral plane with a normal Banishing Test (p. 188, *SR4A*). If the possession fails or the spirit is banished, the critter may not attempt to possess that vessel again until the sun next rises or sets. (Spirits and Vessels, p. 95, *Street Magic*)

Psychokinesis (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

The being with the Psychokinesis power can generate psychokinetic energy with a Strength and Agility equal to the hits scored on a Magic + Willpower Test, similar to the Magic Fingers spell (p. 211, *SR4A*).

Quake (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Special • Duration: Instant

The spirit can create earthquakes with potentially devastating effects in areas which are particularly vulnerable to them. The quake affects an area with a radius of (spirit's Force) kilometers, and the shaking persists intermittently for (Force) minutes. Areas especially vulnerable to earthquakes are usually not areas that receive them frequently, as people in those areas tend to build dwellings with earthquakes in mind. An earthquake that has little effect in San Francisco might be very destructive were it in Istanbul. The spirit makes a Magic + Willpower Test and the

number of hits represents the magnitude of the quake, as noted on the Quake Table (p. 101, *Street Magic*).

Realistic Form (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Special

A spirit with Realistic Form can be mistaken for a normal physical creature or object when it materializes, or it appears unremarkable when joined to a vessel. A spirit that appears as a metahuman would have a heartbeat and a regular breathing rate. A spirit that appeared as an object mimics the object's normal functionality; for example, a toaster could be plugged into the wall to toast bread (though it would have no Matrix link, making it an antique toaster). The spirit is in no way disguised from the astral plane, but to physical observation appears to any senses to be a natural part of the physical world.

Note that spirits with the Materialization power normally only have one materialized form. Materializing spirits with this power can choose to appear using Realistic Form or their normal materialized form. A fire elemental can still appear as a column of angry flames, but might also be able to appear as a beautiful woman.

Regeneration (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Auto • Range: Self • Duration: Always

A critter with Regeneration rapidly heals any Physical damage. At the end of a Combat Turn, make a Magic + Body Test. Each hit regenerates 1 point of Physical or Stun damage. If a critter has already taken enough damage to enter into Physical damage overflow, the critter is not considered dead until it has had a chance to make a Regeneration Test. After a critter has made a Regeneration Test, if the damage overflow is still greater than the critter's Body attribute, then the critter is dead.

Certain types of damage cannot be regenerated from this power. Damage to the brain or spinal cord (for example, from a called shot to the head) cannot be healed this way. Likewise, magical damage from weapon foci, combat spells, critter/adept powers, or other magic may not be healed through Regeneration. If the critter has an Allergy, the critter cannot regenerate damage until the allergen's presence is removed.

Search (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Special. Duration: Special

The being may seek any person, place, or object. To find the target, the creature makes a Magic + Intuition (5, 10 minutes) Extended Test. Apply modifiers from the Search Modifiers Table. (p. 297, *SR4A*). The critter must have seen what it is searching for before; spirits may search out anything that their summoner provides them with a mental image of.

Critters with the Astral Form power may use Search in astral space and do not have to materialize while searching.

Shadow Cloak (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Free • Range: Self • Duration: Sustained

This power allows a creature to envelop itself in utter darkness, making it appear to be a shadow. Though Shadow Cloak is useless in full daylight and redundant in complete darkness, a creature with this power can be difficult to detect in any other lighting conditions. Apply a -2 dice pool modifier to Perception

Tests to detect the creature in Normal Light and a -4 dice pool modifier in Partial Light conditions. In Glare conditions, apply a +1 dice pool modifier to notice the creature.

Silence (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Special • Duration: Sustained

A creature with this power can surround itself with a sphere of silence with a radius equal to the creature's Magic in meters. Sounds originating from inside the area are muffled, and sound entering the area is harder to hear either by the creature or anyone else. Sound-based Perception Tests and the Damage Value of sound-based attacks are reduced by the spirit's Magic.

Sonic Projection (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Special • Duration: Sustained

This power affects everyone able to hear it (except for critters of the same type), creating a highly distracting, deafening, and almost painful infernal buzzing. The spirit or critter makes an Opposed Test using its Magic x 2 against each target's Willpower. Sound dampers and spells like Hush/Silence provide additional dice to the defender equal to their rating/hits scored. Each net hit scored by the user provides a negative dice pool modifier on all tests for as long as the buzzing is sustained.

Spirit Pact (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Special • Range: Special • Duration: Special

The spirit gains the ability to enter into one or more spirit pacts (see p. 108, *Street Magic*). The gamemaster has final say as to which pacts a spirit can enter into.

Storm (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: Special • Duration: Special

A spirit with this power can send a massive and destructive elemental storm against an area. Icy rain, bolts of lightning, hurricane force winds, and worse strike the area with reckless abandon. The affected area's radius equals the spirit's Magic x 100 meters. The spirit makes a single Magic + Unarmed Combat Test, and all creatures and objects in the area are subject to Suppressive Fire (see p. 154, *SR4A*). The Storm's base Damage Value is the spirit's Force and it inflicts Physical damage.

Taint (Paranormal)

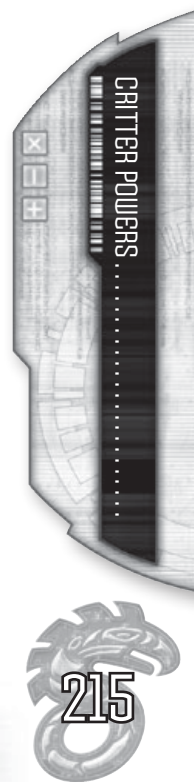
Type: M • Action: Complex • Range: Special • Duration: Special

A toxic critter uses Taint to intensify the mana "pollution" in a domain that is already aspected towards toxic magic (see Domains, p. 120, *Street Magic*). Use the rules for standard Cleansing (p. 55, *Street Magic*), but consider any hits the toxic critter gets as increasing a toxic background count by the same value as he would have diminished it.

Vanishing (Paranormal)

Type: M • Action: Free • Range: Self • Duration: Special

Creatures with the Vanishing power have the ability to disappear entirely from the physical and astral planes at will, leaving no trace of their existence. While the disappearance can be captured on film, video, or trideo cameras with ease, there is no way known to stop or prevent it as neither physical nor magical barriers can stop a creature from vanishing. Though no one knows



where creatures with the Vanishing power go when they disappear, paranaturalists and occultists speculate that they go to the meta-planes of astral space to which the fey are native to. They may also reappear with a Complex Action; although they may choose to materialize directly without going through astral space, although they may also choose to appear there if they want to.

Wealth (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Special

A spirit with the Wealth power can produce precious metals, jewels, rare plants, and other items of great value to mortals. Where these items actually come from—perhaps they are magically created or transported from a metaplane—is a question no spirit has felt the need to answer. Once per month, the spirit may make a Magic + Edge Test. Every hit generates 10,000 nuyen worth of mineral alchemical reagents (normally precious metals or gems). These materials are permanent creations and indefinitely carry the spirit's astral signature. Market conditions may vary, and it may be very difficult to sell magical gems depending upon location.

The spirit can also generate a similar amount of temporary wealth every day, but these seemingly valuable items vanish the next time the sun rises or sets, or transform into non-valuable goods such as dirt or beans. For this reason, savvy businessmen are reticent about purchasing magical gold.

Weather Control (Paranormal)

Type: P • Action: Complex • Range: LOS • Duration: Sustained

The Weather Control power allows a creature to manipulate certain weather conditions. The desired weather must be possible in the environment where the power is used (no blizzards in Death Valley or heat waves in Iceland, for example). The weather condition builds over time, reaching a peak when the critter completes a Magic + Willpower (10, 30 minutes) Extended Test. The creature only “summons” the desired weather; it does not control it. For example, a creature that summons a thunderstorm cannot direct where the lightning bolts may strike.

EMERGENT POWERS

Anthropomorphism (Emergent)

Technocritters with this power can use Threading to emulate a Physical Active skill into complex forms that their neuromuscular system can process while paying attention to another person's behavior (use of a Active skill) and its consequences, basically imitating human fine motor activity (even if the species does not have opposable thumbs). While this process is similar to Emulation (p. 149, *Unwired*) the critter must succeed in Threading (3) Success Test to temporarily emulate the skill as a Rating 1 complex form.

AR-Parallelism (Emergent)

AR-Parallelism enables technocritters to perceive the physical and the digital, reality-augmented world simultaneously by multisensory processing. While their vision and experience is comparable to the AR overlay seen by mundane Matrix users, technocritters can multitask in both worlds without any drawback. In game terms, AR-parallel beings never suffer from any situational

negative dice pool modifiers that result from online distractions such as performing a data search test, intrusive infomercials, or any other virtual sight obstructions.

Blend (Emergent)

A sprite can blend with the node's environment to digitally “hide,” applying a -2 dice pool modifier to any Matrix Perception Tests performed to spot the sprite. This power also enables the sprite to cloak its presence in terms of resource allocation within the node, so it is harder to target during combat; apply a -2 dice pool modifier to all Matrix Attack Tests against the blended sprite.

Cozenage (Emergent)

Critters with this power are adept at convincing programs and devices that its orders are coming from a trusted and privileged source. It receives a +2 modifier on Spoof Command Tests (p. 232, *SR4A*), and the modifier for hacking security or admin accounts is reduced by 2 (so +1 for security and +4 for admin).

Diagnostics (Emergent)

The Diagnostics power allows the sprite to evaluate the inner workings of an electronic device. The sprite must be present in the node of the device in question. The sprite can then assist someone using or repairing the device with a Teamwork Test. Make a sprite rating x 2 test; each hit adds 1 die to the character's test to use or repair the item. The maximum dice bonus the character can receive from the teamwork test is equal to that character's skill.

E-Hive (Emergent)

Technocritters can use this power to merge their personae to form an E-Hive with great power. Contrary to Emerged Swarms that allows technocritters to interact with each other to cooperate in the Matrix, E-Hive forms a collective “consciousness,” a hive-like digital entity (so-called resonance gestalt) that counts as single persona for all rules purposes (e.g. access ID, targeting, tracking) even if composed of several Resonance beings. All critters participating in the network must be within signal range of each other to generate the E-Hive gestalt.

The E-Hive has a Resonance attribute equal to the average Resonance of the beings merging +1 for every two critters joining the E-Hive up to a maximum of 10. The E-Hive's Matrix attributes and complex forms are equal to its Resonance, although it may possess only the complex forms and powers that members of the collective possess. The E-Hive's skills are the average of the skill ratings of all participating technocritters, though the E-Hive gets a +1 dice pool modifier for each two members forming it up to a maximum dice pool modifier equal to the base skill value.

All damage that the gestalt receives, no matter if by matrix damage or Fading, is distributed among its members as the E-Hive sees fit (so it may be distributed among a number of members or one member may be assigned to take it). Still, no matter how the damage is distributed the gestalt receives a wound modifier for every three boxes of damage taken.

If a member leaves the assembly (due to death, rebooting, lost connection, or getting out of signal range), the E-Hive's ratings are adjusted accordingly. As long as the members are joined through the E-Hive power, they cannot be attacked individually virtually (though individual members may be physically attacked).



Gremlins (Emergent)

This power causes a device to mysteriously malfunction, or operate in some (detrimental) manner outside of its usual parameters. The sprite must be in the device's node, or in another node to which the device is subscribed. Make an Opposed Test between the sprite's rating x 2 and the device's System + Firewall. If the sprite succeeds, the device suffers a glitch (p. 62, *SR4A*). The gamemaster chooses a malfunction appropriate to the device and situation, such as a jammed control, a looped signal, or a faulty reading. If the sprite scores 4 net hits, treat it as a critical glitch—the device crashes, burns out, or jolts its user with an electrical shock. If used against a drone or vehicle, this power can force the driver to make a Crash Test. The sprite's rating serves as a negative dice pool modifier to the test.

Hardening (Emergent)

A sprite with this power can temporarily empower its Armor complex form to become like Hardened Armor (p. 212), allowing the sprite to soak damage from most sources as long as it continues to use the power. Using Hardening counts as a Complex Action, similar to going on Full Defense.

Holographic Concealment (Emergent)

Critters with this power can create hi-res AROs to provide themselves or others with a holographic concealment from people using AR overlays in AR-dense environments. Holographic Concealment subtracts a number of dice equal to the critter's Resonance from any Perception Test to locate the concealed subject when the observer is using AR overlay.

Resonance Bond (Emergent)

The critter gains the ability to enter into one or more resonance bonds (Resonance Bonds, p. 160, *Unwired*). Resonance bonds can be formed with any sapient being, though most bonds are ineffectual with non-technomancers.

Bastet Bond: This bond allows for direct communication by linking the communication centers of the brain together between the critter and a sapient being. By tapping into the linguistic abilities of the bonded being, the critter is able to communicate directly through basic language skills instead of Matrix iconography.

Resonant Conditioning (Emergent)

Resonant beings with this power may emit a resonant meme, a coded stimulus that may infect a target by implanting it into the persona's conscience or decision-making software (in case of agents), comparable to a post-hypnotic command. Targets virtually present within the same node that become exposed to the stimulus must resist in an Opposed Test using Firewall + System against the critter's Resonance. If the technocritter achieves at least one net success, the persona is affected. The viral message that the critter sends is subject to the gamemaster, but the command should be primal and handled like an Influence spell (p. 210, *SR4A*) mechanically. Normal users (or spiders) could be told to log off, while agents could be signaled "to scan somewhere else." While sapient beings may roll Willpower Tests to overcome the effect if confronted with the wrongness of the suggestion, agents and non-sapient constructs may roll a similar test using Pilot each Combat Turn as the constructs attempt to revert to their original command sets.

Although the power is limited to VR, gamemasters may choose to have it affect users receiving visual AR data from a node in which the power is used.

Spraying (Emergent)

Technocritters with this power are able to digitally mark their territory by generating Resonance-originating AROs. While used by technocritters to identify the nodes they usually roam, it is also used to communicate with or repel other Emerged species. To set a mark within a node where it hasn't the necessary privileges, the technocritters must succeed in an Opposed Test between the critter's Resonance x 2 against the node's System + Firewall to spray the mark.

Upon the technocritter's discretion, these marks may be infused to repel other "prey species" (icons such as Matrix users and agents). If such an ARO mark is analyzed with a Matrix Perception Test, the analyzing icon has to resist the mark's effect with System + Firewall against the technocritter's Resonance x 2. If the ARO scores any net hits, sapient beings will be subjected to "feelings" of unease and imminent "danger" and suffer a -1 dice pool modifier to all actions in the node per net hit. In terms of agents, the mark's effect leads to conflicts in the program's coding (its decision-making and fuzzy logic routines), yielding the same effect.

Information left on ARO "scent" marks is generally unintelligible and may therefore appear encrypted (although they are not). Marks may be detected with a Matrix Perception (2) Test and removed with a Computer + Edit (1) Test (with or without Resonance) once identified, ending any effect.

Suppression (Emergent)

The sprite has an innate ability to confuse firewalls that detect the sprite engaging in illegitimate activity. Any time the sprite triggers an alert (p. 238, *SR4A*), the alert is delayed for (rating ÷ 2, round up) Combat Turns.

Technovantage [Echo] (Emergent)

Technovantage grants the critter a specific power usually acquired as an Echo by technomancers during Submersion. It follows the same rules as the Echo of the same name (for the description of Echoes see p. 243–244, *SR4A* and p. 145–148, *Unwired*). If the Echo's effect is based on the technomancer's submersion grade, treat those as if the technocritter had a submersion grade of Resonance/2.

Traceroute (Emergent)

The Traceroute power allows a sprite to sniff out the data-trail left by an individual's daily interactions with the virtual world—credit transactions, phone calls, video surveillance shots, email, driving a car with GridGuide, or even using a pass-key to get through a corporate enclave's security gate. In 2070, almost everyone leaves a constant trace of themselves within the Matrix on a daily basis, every time they access their commlinks. Traceroute gives a sprite the ability to home in on the most recent interactions.

To use Traceroute, the sprite "sniffs" some data relating to the target and makes an Extended Test pitting its Rating + Track

against a variable threshold as determined by the Traceroute Table with a base time of 1 hour. If it succeeds, the sprite can locate the node that the target is currently in, if that person is online, or the most recent physical location from which the target interacted with the Matrix.

Tunnel (Emergent)

Technocritters with the Tunnel power are able to invade networks and pierce through their firewalls as if they were using a Hidden Access Point (see Backdoors, p. 97, *Unwired*), except that no tests are required for the critter to create it. To log on to the node, the critter has to succeed in a Hacking + Exploit (1) Test, and the Firewall gets no test to detect the intruder. As no account is being used, access won't be noticed as long as the critter remains under the radar of patrolling IC, but the critter must rely solely on Hacking for all tests as long as it is connected to the node in this manner. IC or security hackers that perceive the technocritter will immediately recognize it as an intruder.

Venomous Code (Emergent)

The technocritter "secretes" venomous code that is poisonous to Matrix icons. Whenever a construct is damaged in cybercombat, the E-venom is "injected" into the persona's code. Treat it as if it were a toxin (p. 254, *SRA4*) working as a digital attack program with the following attributes: Vector: Cybercombat Damage, Speed: 1 Combat Turn, Power: 6, Effect: Matrix Damage. Upon the gamemaster's discretion, other technocritters may have different toxins inflicting damage directly to the user's Stun or Physical Condition Monitor like Black IC attack programs (p. 237, *SR4A*) or carrying program options (p. 114, *Unwired*).

Virtual Mimicry (Emergent)

Virtual mimicry enables a Resonance being to alter its persona and signature to mimic another icon or persona in a node and to appear as a construct greater than it actually is. Whenever the technocritter is scanned by an Analyze Icon action (p. 229, *SR4A*), use the critter's Resonance as a threshold to determine net hits for the test. If the system (a hacker, sprite, node, etc.) does not beat the threshold and acquires no net hits, he will get a wrong reading (the one the critter wants to project).

TRACEROUTE TABLE

Subject Interacts with the Matrix	Threshold
Constantly	4
Infrequently (a few hours a day)	8
Rarely (once a day)	12
Very rarely (less than once a day)	16
Situation	Threshold Modifiers
Subject's most recent transaction/access was logged	-1
Subject using Stealth during transactions	+Stealth
SIN, commcode, MSP address known	-3

WEAKNESSES

Allergy (Mundane)

Many critters suffer from an allergy to one or more substances or conditions. A critter with an Allergy suffers discomfort or damage when touched by the allergen. This weakness is rated similarly to the Allergy negative quality (p. 94, *SR4A*).

Dietary Requirement (Paranormal)

The critter must consume a certain type of unique substance at a regular interval to sustain its life. This substance can vary, but it must be unusual and exotic. Examples include gold, metahuman flesh, orichalcum, or toxic waste. How much and how often varies from critter to critter. Without the specified requirement in its diet, the critter eventually sickens and dies.

Essence Loss (Paranormal)

Critters with Essence Loss have no actual Essence of their own and must drain Essence from others in order to survive. Beings with Essence Loss lose 1 point of Essence every lunar cycle (1 month). As Essence decreases, Magic may also be affected (p. 68, *SR4A*).

If a creature is reduced to 0 Essence, it will die in (Body + Willpower) days if it does not replenish itself. A creature in this state is extremely dangerous—a starved predator that hunts for fresh Essence with mindless ferocity.

Evanescence (Paranormal)

Extraplanar entities suffer from a phenomenon known as Evanescence, an irresistible fading of form and Force if they remain in Earth's astral space. Unfortunately, these beings have learned to counter such dissipation by anchoring their astral forms to the physical plane, normally through the use of the Inhabitation or Possession powers.

Extraplanar spirits can persist in the Gaiasphere for only a limited amount of time. Once a spirit has found its way to Earth's astral plane (or was conjured, in the case of insect spirits), its astral form begins to dissipate. For each sunrise or sunset that a spirit with Evanescence remains in full astral form, its Force rating is permanently reduced by 1. If the spirit's Force reaches 0, it dissipates (whether it is disrupted or permanently destroyed is unknown). A spirit with this weakness that is bound to a magician, or that goes free, only loses Force at the rate of 1 point per week.

As a side effect of Evanescence, the astral forms of extraplanar spirits are translucent and harder to detect. Apply a -3 dice modifier to all Assensing Tests (see Astral Visibility, p. 114, *Street Magic* and Astral Perception, p. 191, *SR4A*) against any such spirits in full astral form. This insubstantial form also enables them to bypass astral barriers with greater ease (see Passing Through Barriers, p. 194, *SR4A*). Apply a +3 dice pool modifier to the spirit for the relevant test.

All effects of Evanescence are negated as soon as the spirit inhabits or possesses a vessel. If it is somehow driven out of the vessel, the spirit's astral form starts to dissipate again.

Fragile (Mundane)

Critters with this quality have a diminished ability to withstand damage—either from an overly sensitive system or soft skeletal structure. For every Rating point of Fragile, the creature's Condition Monitor is reduced by 2.

Reduced Senses (Mundane)

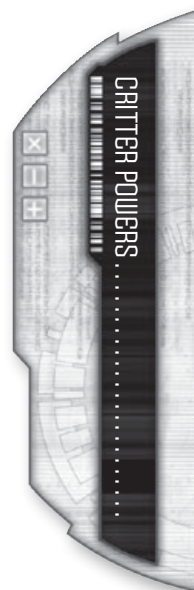
Any or all of the critter's five basic senses may be limited in effectiveness. Typically reduced senses function at half-normal range or effectiveness, but a critter can be handicapped further, even to the point of complete absence of that sense.

Uneducated (Mundane)

While sapient critters are capable of interacting with metahuman society, not all sapient critters are sophisticated enough to adapt into a high-tech society. Some, such as the naga and the merrow, live in their native societies without using metahuman technology (although all sapient creatures are able to learn to use technology). The Uneducated weakness reflects this, and this weakness behaves in the same manner as the Uneducated negative quality (p. 96, *SR4A*).

Vulnerability (Mundane)

Creatures with a vulnerability to a specific substance take additional damage from weapons made of the substance. Increase the Damage Value of all attacks with the substance by 2. Weapons made of a substance to which the creature is vulnerable bypass any Immunities that it may have. Damage taken from a substance to which the creature is vulnerable cannot be healed by Regeneration or magic.



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