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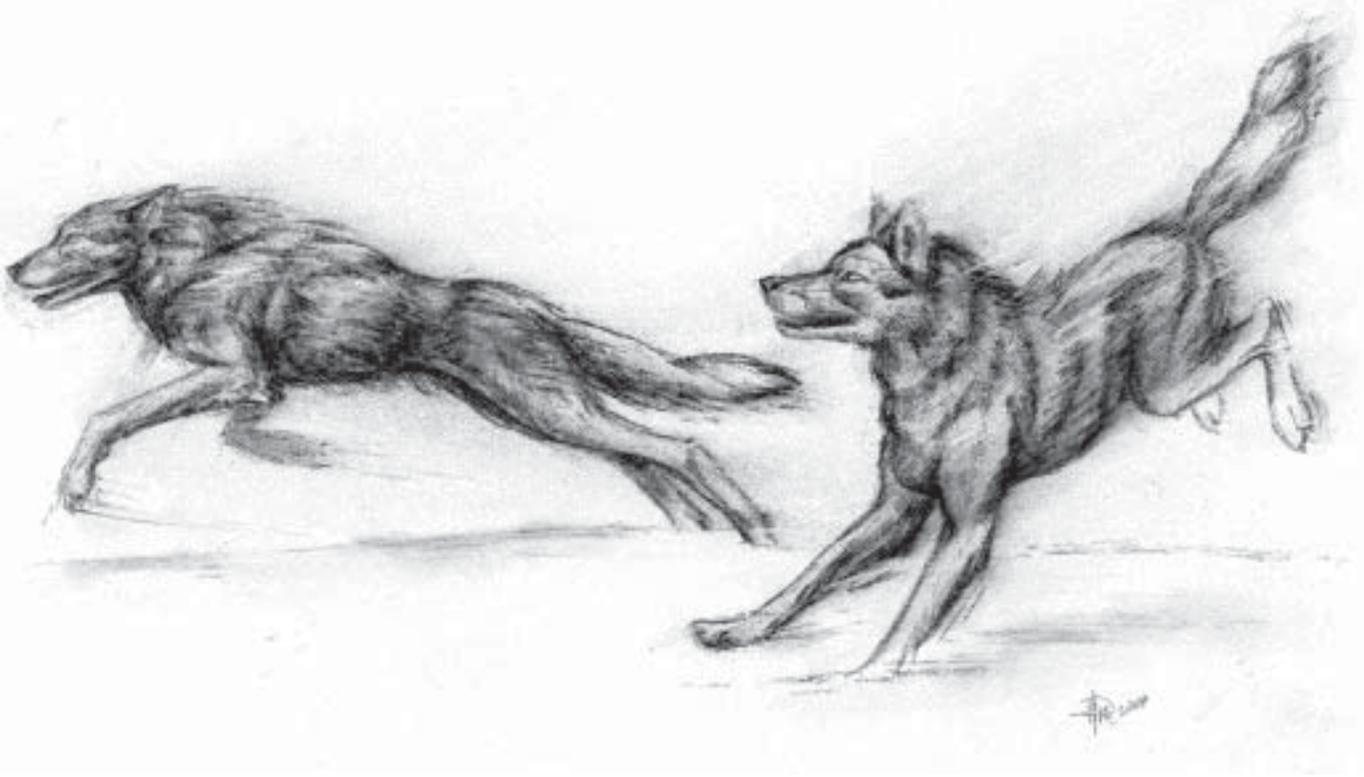
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Introduction



Taru watched from the cover of the thicket as the orcs made camp. His mouth began to water involuntarily as the green-skins spitted a deer's haunch and placed it over their fire. The dog lying to his right was having the same reaction. Snowbelly, the rabbit, had mixed feelings; he felt sorrow for a fellow woodland creature, but at the same time he was relieved they had not decided to eat some of his cousins – the rabbits in these woods were almost all related to him. Pik-pik, the sparrow, noticed the wolf and the dog's reactions and simply shook her head, muttering, "Predators."

"Are ... are those the Orcs?" Snowbelly asked, twitching his nose in distaste; both at the Orcs and at the canines' response to their meal.

The bird twittered at the rabbit. "'Are those the Orcs?' When was the last time you saw an Orc in these woods? What other Orcs do you suppose are out here?"

Snowbelly hopped backward indignantly. "Well, I don't know — what do I know from Orcs? They could have been dwarves, or... what are the other green ones? Goblins! That's it."

The dog backed out of the thicket and turned to the bickering pair. "Safety tip, Snowbelly: dwarves aren't green, and if you call a dwarf 'Orc,' he'll split you in half. No matter how 'cute and fluffy' you are. Those are definitely the Orcs."

"Hmm." Taru had not left his place. "They're not all green, either. One of them has different colors all over — like a snake's scales."

The dog turned to face the wolf. "Yeah, those are pictures. Two-legs do that sometimes; they put pictures on themselves called 'tattoos.' It probably means he's a wizard."

Taru turned his head to face his companions. "How do you know so much, dog?"

The dog sat down. "My humans talk, I listen." He frowned, "And would it kill you to use my name, Taru?"

The other two animals chuckled; the two predators were old friends, but this was an old argument.

"It might." Taru gritted his teeth. "A mighty canine like you, stuck with an embarrassing label like that — it's unseemly."

The dog straightened, sitting up straight and tall. "'Sweetums' is not embarrassing. It's an honor to be given a name by good humans. It means 'beloved friend.'"

Pik-pik chirped up. "He's still mad that his half-brother got adopted by humans and they named him 'Mr. Fluffy.'"

The wolf growled.

Snowbelly looked away, down at the camp. "Why would they change their color? If I could blend in with

the leaves I'd be quite content to stay that way."

Pik-pik perched in a bush next to the rabbit. "I don't know — I like the colors. I think it's pretty."

Taru chuckled, "Glad you like it, Pik-pik; he's yours."

The bird fluffed up her feathers. "Why me? And since when are we taking assignments from you? It's bad enough you had to wake me up, drag me out here, and then send me off to the far corners of the forest to fetch these two, so the lot of us can spend all night tracking a bunch of smelly Orcs because you think they're up to no good. A lot of nerve you've got."

The wolf stalked toward Pik-pik, forcing her to hop backwards. "Allow me to address your concerns with a neck-breaking."

"Break it up, you two," Sweetums got between them, raising his hackles just enough to get attention. "Pik-pik, you are the only one of us who can keep a wizard busy enough to keep him from singeing our fur while we take out the fighters. It's not a matter of giving orders; it's a matter of knowing where our strength lies. And in magic, our strength is you."

The bird settled, ruffled feathers soothed. "You see, Taru, that was all you needed to say."

Taru growled, "Fine, can we get on with it, now?"



Bechak grumbled about the meal. He always did. "Why did it have to be venison again? Couldn't we raid that halfling cottage we saw in the valley? Or at least some of those rabbits I saw. These things are all muscle."

Guvak, Bechak's brother, said, "You want something without a lot of muscle on it? How's about we chop off one of your arms and spit *that*? That ought to be really well-marbled." The other Orcs laughed and each began to add their own suggestion of what could be cut off. From there, the jibes degenerated, getting cruder and more anatomically improbable.

Bechak stomped back to the log he and his brother used as a bench. "You can all just kiss my..." He stopped in mid-step, suddenly unable to move. "Uh, is

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anybody else having trouble moving?” He said, more annoyed than afraid.

Only Traag, the leader, and Reskat, the shaman, seemed to be able to move. They each began to stand up, but the world exploded into fur and mayhem before they could.

A sparrow chirped and streaks of light, like miniature comets following a highly eccentric orbit shot out of the darkness around the camp, slamming into Reskat, leaving tiny, smoking holes in the Orc’s chest. He screamed and the arcane power beginning to gather at his fingertips dissolved away.

At that same moment, Sweetums leapt out of the brush surrounding the camp. He threw himself onto Traag, snarling and snapping, claws scrabbling futilely at the Orc’s boiled leather breastplate. While the big Orc was occupied with keeping the dog’s teeth from his throat, Taru sped silently from the darkness on the other side of the campsite, and buried his fangs in the back of the Orc’s calf.

Traag howled in pain but tried to maneuver himself from between the two beasts, to no avail. He had only

barely had time to grab his battleaxe, but both animals were on him so tightly as to make the weapon almost useless. He dropped the axe and went for his knife.

Reskat had just managed to pinpoint where the spell that had hurt him had come from. He began to gather the energies for another making, when a small rustling sound came from the bushes to his left. Reskat stared in disbelief as a small brown and white rabbit came tearing out of the darkness as if the hounds of hell itself were behind it. But this rabbit was not running *from* something; it was *charging*. Snowbelly leapt at the shaman, spinning his body around in mid-air. What the Orc did not see was that, as the rabbit’s back legs prepared to kick him, a ghostly nimbus surrounded those limbs, in the shape of a horse’s leg. To Reskat, it appeared that the rabbit kicked him with such force that it broke his back. His last thoughts were of the absurdity of the situation.

Taru and Sweetums, each bleeding from a handful of wounds, both leapt at Traag one last time, Taru taking the Orc’s throat out with his jaws. The massive creature fell to the ground, unable to even scream as he died.

Pik-pik flew in to survey the carnage while the two canines went about the grim work of dispatching the immobilized Orcs. “Well, the man-king’s messenger is safe, but what do we do about the rest of the Orc war-party? There’s far too many of them for this to work again.”

Taru lifted his snout from his bloody task, “Well, someone’s going to have to warn the man-king’s friends, aren’t they. Probably best we give the news to the messenger this lot was going to ambush, while someone else flies to talk to that ranger friend of hers on the other edge of the forest, so he can help raise the man-king’s army.” Taru grinned as he said this, looking unintentionally demonic with Orc-gore dripping from his teeth.

It took a moment for Pik-pik to understand the whole implication of what the wolf said. “What? You mean... Oh, for the love of ...” The bird took flight and aimed herself toward a certain cottage she knew, the entire length of the woods away, grumbling the entire time. “It’s always me, isn’t it. Well, I’ve got half a mind to give you wings and let you do your own run-and-fetch, maybe let me get a decent night’s sleep once in a while.”

With the assistance of his ancestors and his own

Introduction

feet, Snowbelly, doused and smothered the Orcs' fire, and was now trying to ignore the gruesome sight the dog and the wolf were leaving behind them.

Sweetums looked up from the last Orc. "Gah, these things taste foul! I'm going to have to drink a river to get the taste out of my mouth."

"Or, perhaps, you could find something tastier to eat and cleanse your palate that way." Taru said. Both predators' eyes fell on the deer's haunch that had been knocked away from the fire during the fight.

"'Waste not, want not,' my humans say." Sweetums positioned himself on one side of the succulent flesh.

"Maybe those humans are smarter than I thought." Taru said.

Welcome to The Noble Wild

This book is a rules supplement for fantasy role-playing games that introduces an entirely new kind of adventure and an entirely new kind of hero. In a Noble

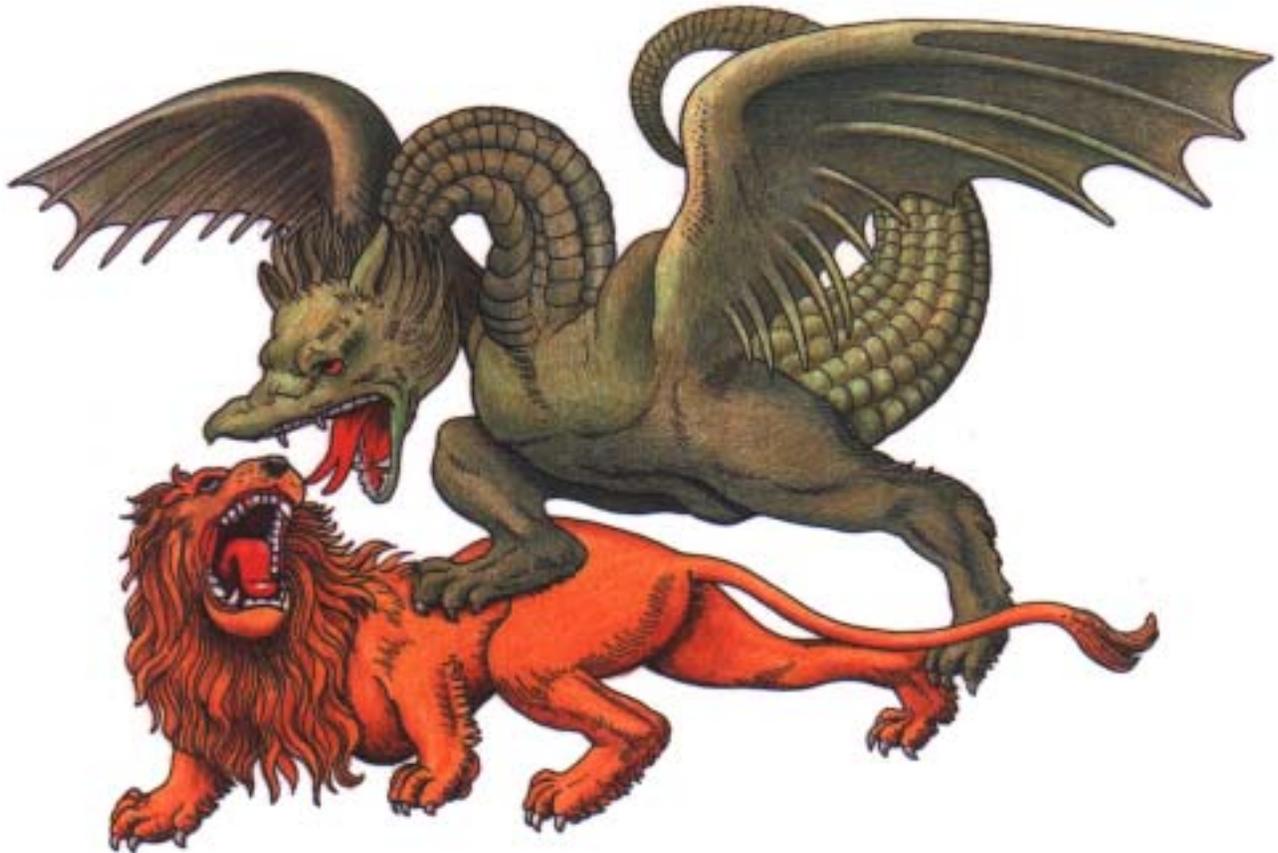
Wild campaign, players take on the roles of animals: dogs, cats, tigers, snakes, etc. But not just normal animals; these are *noble* animals - more intelligent, dynamic examples of their species, born of a special bloodline.

Noble animals can take the same character classes available to humanoid characters, and can gain skills and feats just like their two-legged counterparts. In addition, noble animals can gain magical abilities, similar to those granted by magic items, through Boons; and even more fantastic powers through performing heroic actions, called Deeds.

Following is an overview of what the various sections of this book contain.

Introduction

The section you are reading right now. It includes a bit of short fiction featuring Taru the wolf and his team of noble animal heroes, and this summary of the book's contents.



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Chapter 1: Species

The largest part of the book by far, this chapter introduces over 65 new playable species and sub-species that players can use.

Most of the species available to players were created by adapting the abilities and traits of the natural animals from which they are drawn. The ability adjustments, with the exceptions of Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma, are calculated using the original stats for the animals. These scores are, for the most part, just as they are initially generated. Some noble species are a bit less intelligent than humans on average, and some are more or less appealing as well, and these differences are reflected in the attribute adjustments for the species. Most natural animals will have a slightly higher Wisdom scores than their noble counterparts, as they generally have more highly tuned instincts.

Many animals are too large and naturally powerful to be balanced player characters to start off with, and it was the designer's intention that all of the species presented could be played together in a balanced campaign. In order to address this, species with more than one hit die were split into levels, with Ability bonuses, and special abilities granted at each level. Some especially powerful species also have an ECL.

Species classes are explained in greater detail in the same chapter.

Size increases are handled with the use of Size Threshold, also explained in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Classes

This chapter highlights the changes necessary to make the basic character classes appropriate for noble animal characters, as well as a new class, the Greater Familiar, available to both noble animal and humanoid characters. After the basic classes are several prestige classes tailor-made for noble animals.

In order to make the noble animal characters comparable to their humanoid counterparts, the concept of Defensive Attitudes is introduced in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Skills

This chapter lists the new skills available to noble animal characters, as well as some new uses for old skills.

Chapter 4: Feats

Several new feats, as well as some previously seen only in the Monster Manual, are presented here.

Chapter 5: Deeds

This chapter introduces an entirely new concept to the game. Deeds are magical abilities that can be gained by performing specific heroic actions and then paying an experience point cost. They are available in "trees," with each tree having five deeds in it, each available after a certain level. In some ways, a deed tree can be seen as a miniature prestige class that can be taken without interrupting a character's advancement in whatever other class he wishes to follow.

Chapter 6: Magic and Spells

This chapter highlights the fundamental differences between humanoid and animal magic, including the concept of Blood Components. In addition, over a dozen new spells are introduced, including a new type of spell, the Boon, which allows noble animal spell casters to bestow some of their own natural advantages upon others.

Chapter 7: Magical Treasure

Noble animals have little use for traditional treasure, magical or otherwise. What they *can* use, however, are Boons; magical gifts and abilities that duplicate the abilities of conventional magic items. This chapter introduces created boons, as well as the concept of Ability Sacrifice.

Chapter 8: Campaigns

This chapter gives guidelines on running a Noble Wild campaign, in three distinct campaign models, depending on the play style and preferences of your group. The Noble Wild can be run as it's own game, or as an add-in for any other campaign world.

Appendix I: Animals

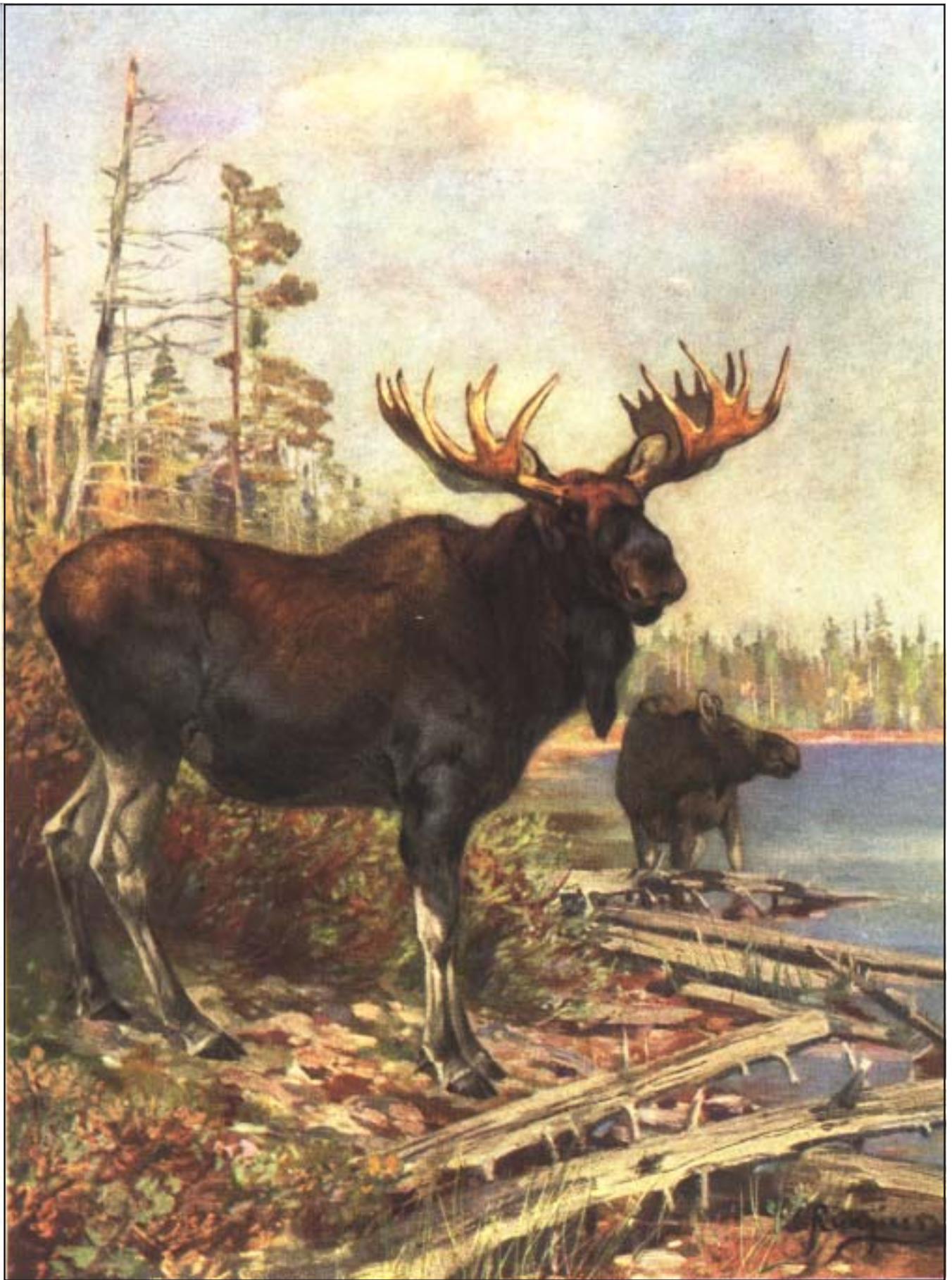
This section has the game rule information for the "natural" versions of every new noble animal species represented here.

Appendix II: d20 Modern Campaigns

Some players and game masters may decide they like the idea of playing the Noble Wild in a modern setting rather than the traditional fantasy one. This is a brief guide to converting your campaign to d20 Modern.

Introduction





Chapter 1: Species



At the dawn of all things, the gods created the land and sea, the sky and void, and people and animals. Certain gods realized that the humanoid beings emerging into prominence on the world would become very important indeed. The gods didn't want the humanoids to flounder and fail, especially since many of the gods' own power came from these creatures' worship. But at the same time, they didn't want them to become too powerful. In order to aid the fledgling peoples, and to place some limits on them as well, the gods raised one of every species of animal that walked, crawled, swam, or flew to be the king of its kind. Each king, in addition to being a paragon of its kind, was given the gifts of reason and speech. Their intelligence was increased far above their natural brethren, and the capacity for magic lurked within them that would find a taste for it. These kings and their bloodlines would become the ruling classes of the animals, leading and protecting their species. But the most important gift given the noble beasts was a question: *Will you serve or challenge?*

The decision of whether to serve or challenge the humanoids was left to each noble animal answer on his own, although occasionally nearly an entire species would come down on the same side. Noble dogs almost universally chose to serve, forming a lasting partnership and bond of friendship with humans. Noble crocodiles tend to come down on the challenge side, though some have entered into the service of lizard-folk tribes. Where the nobility leads, the natural animals follow.

Because of their greater intelligence and ability, noble animals are almost always the leaders of their group, pack, herd, flock, or pod. Not every group of animals will have a noble among them. In fact, they are extremely rare, and only one noble (or mated pair) is ever found in any group, except for that noble's young.

With the exceptions of cats, dogs, horses, and some species of birds, noble animals are almost never found among their domesticated cousins. In fact, the domestic breeds of many animals are so diluted in bloodline that no nobles exist for them. This is why there are no noble cows or domestic sheep (although wild sheep are present). Hybridization is also not a practice embraced by noble animals, since they only rarely will breed true, so mules are also not represented. Ligers are an entirely different story, and there may be a single, lonely king of ligers lounging in some sultan's court.

Noble animals most often breed with non-noble members of their own species. The first two offspring of any such union will always be nobles, and all additional children will be normal. This happens no matter how many young natural members of the species would normally have, so a noble elephant would have a single noble elephant child, and possibly a second a few years later, while a noble rat might have a litter of over a dozen, only two of which would be noble.

Noble animals seem to age at a different rate than

their natural cousins as well. Their growth often has little to do with their age, but rather with experience. A noble wolf who lives a life of shelter and safety, never facing any real challenges, may remain a pup for years. While a noble elephant who finds himself thrust into a maelstrom of adventure and danger may be full grown after only two years. Most noble animals achieve some degree of maturity after half a year's growth, unless their species normally matures faster. For example, a noble rat will be full grown in a matter of weeks, while a noble deer will be a very precocious yearling at six months old.

Despite their rarity, noble animals seem fated to always come into contact with each other, sometimes as allies, sometimes as foes.

While their fates tend to be inextricably linked with the various humanoid races, the noble animals still find many of the things the two-legged creatures do to be baffling. Representational art, for example, is lost on even the most intelligent animal unless he has some experience of the concept. To a tiger, a beautiful landscape painting of a field of flowers next to an ancient temple appears to be a brightly colored piece of cloth. A dove makes no distinction between a statue of a great hero and any other large rock. And writing? While nobles in frequent contact with humanoids will be able to recognize writing, it is a rare beast indeed that ever learns how to read it, let alone write it.

There are laws among the noble animal societies, just as there are among humanoids. These laws have never been written, of course, but every noble knows them. The first is this: *You shall serve or you shall challenge.* The second law, sometimes more observed in the breaking than the keeping, is this: *You shall not prey upon your fellow nobles, no matter their species.* The final law followed by all noble animals is this: *At the dawning of the warming season, the highest of each*

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of all the noble bloodlines shall meet on neutral ground to discuss perils and disputes. There are other laws, held by nobles of different species, or isolated regions, being nearly as diverse and occasionally as pointless and cruel as any humanoid decrees.

Noble Wild Species

Even more so than a humanoid's race, a noble animal character's species will shape their being more than their class. That is not to say that class is inconsequential; just as many animals of the same species in the same group will have different responsibilities and capabilities, noble animals are even more diverse in their abilities and stations.

Common Species Features for Noble Animal Characters

Following are some features that are common to many or all noble animal species. They are reprinted or elaborated on here for ease of reference.

Low-light Vision (Ex)

All noble animal characters can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of shadowy illumination. Unlike most of their natural cousins, noble animals retain the ability to distinguish color and detail under these conditions.

Natural Weapons (Ex)

Almost all of the animals presented here have some sort of built-in method to protect themselves or kill prey. Many will have more than one such natural weapon, such as a lion's bite and 2 claw attacks. Every noble animal character must, upon character creation, nominate which attack will be his primary attack. This will either be a single attack like a bite or gore, or a pair of attacks like a claw or kick. All other attack forms are then considered secondary.

Primary attacks use the character's full attack bonus, while secondary attacks have a -5 penalty. Additionally, the primary attack's damage gains the character's full Str bonus, while secondary attacks only get one half of this bonus (rounded down).

If a noble animal character gains a new natural attack as part of its level progression, it may then, and only then, choose to nominate the new attack form as its primary, relegating the previous one to secondary status.

Each natural attack does one or more specific types of damage.

Damage Type by Natural Weapons

Natural Weapon	Damage Types
Bite	Piercing, Slashing, and Bludgeoning
Butt	Bludgeoning
Claw or Talon	Piercing and Slashing
Gore	Piercing
Hoof	Bludgeoning and Slashing
Kick	Bludgeoning
Slap, Slam, or Stamp	Bludgeoning

As an additional note, remember that any noble animal with a bite attack can attempt a grapple action if it successfully bites a foe in order to continue doing bite damage each round of a successful grapple, but it must do so as a standard action on the next round, and is subject to an attack of opportunity. Various special attacks and abilities can change this.

Normal attacks using natural weapons are not subject to attacks of opportunity.

Scent (Ex)

Many animals can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. Characters with the scent ability can identify familiar odors just as humans do familiar sights.

The character can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet. Strong scents, such as smoke or rotting garbage, can be detected at twice the ranges noted above. Overpowering scents, such as skunk musk or troglodyte stench, can be detected at triple normal range.

When a character detects a scent, the exact location of the source is not revealed — only its presence somewhere within range. The character can take a move action to note the direction of the scent.

Whenever the character comes within 5 feet of the source, he pinpoints the source's location.

A character with the Track feat and the scent ability can follow tracks by smell, making a Wisdom (or Survival) check to find or follow a track. The typical DC for a fresh trail is 10 (no matter what kind of surface holds the scent). This DC increases or decreases depending on how strong the quarry's odor is, the number of creatures, and the age of the trail. For each hour that the

Chapter 1: Species

trail is cold, the DC increases by 2. The ability otherwise follows the rules for the Track feat. Characters tracking by scent ignore the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

Size Matters

As an animal grows in age and experience, it also grows in size. Many of the species presented here will increase in size category over the course of their lives. To represent this, we present the Size Threshold. Each species that grows beyond its starting size has listed for it a Size Threshold. The Size Threshold is compared to the number of Hit Dice that an individual creature has. Whenever the character reaches one of these thresholds, their size category increases by one step, bringing with it the bonuses and penalties listed on the table above and the adjustments to their Ability scores listed on the table below, as well as increasing the damage done by their natural weapons by one step each, as shown on the table below that.

Changes To Statistics By Size

Old Size	New Size	Str	Dex	Con	Natural Armor
Small	Medium	+4	-2	+2	Same
Medium	Large	+8	-2	+4	+2
Large	Huge	+8	-2	+4	+3

Natural Weapon Damage Increases Based On Size

Old Damage	New Damage
1 hp	1d2
1d2	1d3
1d3	1d4
1d4	1d6

1d6	1d8
1d8	2d6
2d6	3d6
3d6	4d6
4d6	6d6
6d6	8d6
8d6	12d6
1d10	2d8
2d8	3d8
3d8	4d8
4d8	6d8
6d8	8d8
8d8	12d8

Example

Let's take a look at the progression of a brown bear named Huun. For his first level, Huun begins his career as a druid. His size is small, so his claws do 1d3 damage, and his bite does 1d4. At 2nd level, Huun decides to embrace his nature, and takes a level of bear, gaining a +1 to his Natural Armor. Now a 1st level druid / 1st level bear, Huun has achieved his 2nd Hit Die, which happens to be the first size threshold for a bear. He has grown to size medium, which means that his Strength increases by +4, his Dexterity drops by -2, his Constitution increases by +2, his claws now do 1d4 damage, and his bite does 1d6. At 3rd level, Huun decides to take another level of bear, so that he won't close himself off to his heritage, and he gains +10 to his Base Speed. For his 4th level, Huun decides to take a 2nd level of druid. This gives him his 4th Hit Die. At 5th level, he goes back to bear for a 5th Hit Die and the Improved Grab ability. He has now reached the second size threshold, so his size increases to large causing

Size Bonuses and Penalties

Animals come in a wide variety of sizes. The modifiers and other features related to size are as follows:

Size Modifiers and Adjustments

Size	Space	Reach	Attack/AC Modifier	Grapple Modifier	Hide Modifier	Carrying Capacity Modifier For:	
						Bipeds	Quadrupeds
Diminutive	1 ft.	0	+4	-12	+12	x 1/4	x 1/2
Tiny	2 1/2 ft.	0	+2	-8	+8x	1/2	x 3/4
Small	5 ft.	5 ft.	+1	-4	+4x	3/4	x 1
Medium	5ft.	5 ft.	+0	+0	+0	x 1	x 1 1/2
Large	10 ft.	10 ft.	-1	+4	-4	x 2	x 3
Huge	15 ft.	15 ft.	-2	+8	-8	x 4	x 6