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Dean Mordwen

A cast of strange familiars

M-U's best friend comes in many shapes and sizes

by Stephen Inniss

Experienced gamers usually regard additions to a game's rules with suspicion — and rightly so. Such additions often make play more complicated and time-consuming, instead of improving the experience or making it more enjoyable. Those who have tinkered with the AD&D™ combat system can attest to this problem: Vexing new details start to bog down the game. At best, players wonder what happened to the adventure. At worst, they forget what the adventure was. But fortunately for meddlers, there are *some* parts of the AD&D game system that can be improved with a relatively small investment of time.

One such part is the first level magic-user spell *find familiar*. The results of this spell can be very important, and once determined, they are frequently referred to. Because *find familiar* is usually cast very infrequently (sometimes only once per magic-user), a more detailed version can offer a real improvement without detracting from the adventure. Expansion and modification of this spell has merit in its own right, and — as is often the case in complex constructions like the AD&D game — the new information can enhance other parts of the game, too.

Like most fantasy role-playing material, the *find familiar* spell has its roots outside of the game system. Familiars played an important role in the wizardry of folklore, serving as sorcerer's helpers, or advising people with strange talents. Though some familiars were invisible, most were, or took the shape of, small animals. In Europe, particularly in England, belief in familiars was common. The familiar was attributed to witches, thereby earning an evil reputation. Elsewhere, the view of familiars was less negative. Siberian shamans, for example, were said to employ familiars as guards and guides to the spirit world.

Not only folklore has influenced the game; familiars are popular in fantasy literature as well. In recent works, one need only think of the mage Ged's otak (little monkeylike creature) in Ursula K. LeGuin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, or the unpleasant companion in Fritz Leiber's short story "Ill Met in Lankhmar."

But if folklore and fantasy literature inspired the *find familiar* spell, then they didn't provide *enough* inspiration. Rules for the spell are incomplete and unbalanced. They are incomplete in that the possibilities for normal animal familiars are restricted to a few European creatures without even encompassing the folk beliefs of that continent. It seems to be assumed that a familiar

will be summoned near human habitation (where else are black cats found?) and in a temperate climate with Old World fauna. But what if a magic-user summons a familiar in a tropical rain forest, on a small island, or in the arctic? The unimaginative response would be to restrict or eliminate the chance of success. But this seems dull when there might be so many other possibilities. A number of real-world animals would make good familiars in an AD&D setting, and many of these beasts were once actually believed to serve as familiars.

The menagerie described below expands and modifies the group of official AD&D familiars. You may want to make further changes for your campaign, but before you use or alter this material, you should understand how the animals below were chosen. Subjects taken into account include: armor class and hit points, size and combat prowess, adaptability, appearance and reputation, and commonness.

Creatures that deviate sharply from the standard familiar's armor class of 7 and the standard hit point range of 2-4 (the statistics given with the spell) have been eliminated from the selection below. Some flexibility regarding these statistics is necessary, however. As the spell stands, a lowly toad familiar becomes harder to hit than many humans, and just as powerful as a hawk familiar. We can "justify" this increase in power by assuming the toad gained more ability when it became a familiar. A change for the better is acceptable. A change for the worse, however, seems unlikely. No animal should become weaker as a familiar than it was as a normal animal. The cat, for instance, now has statistics in *Monster Manual II* which give it a better armor class than 7. Since it is unlikely that only crippled, deficient felines respond to the *find familiar* spell, the cat — and other animals like it — does not take a cut in AC when it becomes a familiar. An effort has been made, however, to not stretch the original spell beyond reason, so nothing smaller than a toad or more powerful than a cat has been allowed. After all, *find familiar* is only a first level spell.

Restricting armor class ratings becomes easier when one accepts that familiars are by nature small animals. In the AD&D game, familiars should be no bigger or heavier than a very large cat (16 pounds maximum). There are a number of good reasons for this. Most, if not all, traditional familiars are small, and so are all of the official familiars. Small size is useful to a creature that serves as a guard, scout, and

spy (as described in the *Players Handbook*). Small animals are more easily concealed in dangerous situations, and they're easier to carry if incapacitated; this becomes increasingly important as their masters rise in level, meeting greater hazards.

Small size may disappoint the sorcerer in search of brawn, but familiars aren't meant to be bodyguards. None of the normal familiars should be more lethal in combat than, say, a hawk. Certainly, venomous animals are inadmissible. The already great range in offensive capability within the group should not be increased. In any case, a physically powerful companion that serves as a magic-user's bodyguard would be redundant. Fighters are already a well established part of the game.

Though they needn't be combat-hardy, familiars should be otherwise adaptable and robust. Without excessive protection and preparation, familiars should be able to go wherever adventurers go: through arctic snowfields, on board ships, across tropic deserts, and into deep, dark caverns. They should be able to survive on simple, prepared rations, or be able to forage for themselves in most places. In general, their requirements should be rather similar to those of humans. The familiar's existence shouldn't be dependent on maintaining wet skin, for instance, or on anything else equally unreasonable.

Perhaps the most important consideration in choosing a new familiar is its appearance and reputation. A creature that sometimes serves as a companion of wizards in fable or fantasy is usually fit for that role in the AD&D game. Failing a reputation as a familiar, the animal should look like it might be found in the company of magic-users. It should be arcane, unusual, and mysterious, or have a bad or uncertain reputation (deserved or not), just as magic does. Nocturnal or darkly colored animals are ideal.

Lastly, animals that are very rare or not well known are not included. Besides requiring excess explanation, many rare animals resemble more common species, so they would simply lengthen an already extensive catalog. Any name given here appears in an ordinary dictionary.

The table on the next page can be used for random determination of familiars — just roll 2d20 when the spell is cast successfully. (The official spell has a 25% failure rate, expressed as "no familiar in range," so check for this failure first.) If a familiar inappropriate to the locale is rolled, check the creature descriptions that follow to see

if another version of the animal would be present. Otherwise, just roll repeatedly until something appropriate is summoned. Each table entry includes the following information: The required dice roll or range of numbers to summon that creature; the name of the creature; its movement rate and damage/attack figures; its special sensory powers; and its armor class, if that figure deviates from the standard AC of 7.

Movement and damage

The movement rates and damage values in the table were developed with an eye toward conformity with the AD&D system rather than with the real world. Reducing an animal's movement rate to a single number inevitably involves judgment, since sprints and endurance are not taken into account. Determining damage per attack is likewise subjective, so the given values need a word of explanation.

The amount of damage done by a small animal's attack creates a problem. On one hand, even the smallest teeth or claws should undeniably cause some damage, and the AD&D world is one in which halflings can cut down storm giants. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine an animal as small as a weasel seriously harming a human. The combat system is scaled to human sizes, so that one point of damage is considerable. Many ordinary humans have only one hit point between themselves and death. There are a number of ways in which the damage done by small animals could be realistically quantified in the AD&D game; unfortunately, they all involve an increase in complexity that defeats the purpose of a system designed more for ease of play than realism. Critical hits, fractions of hit points, damage varying with the size of the opponent — all of these are unacceptable, so when damage occurs, the minimum amount is one hit point.

Giving a small animal the ability to inflict even one hit point of damage can lead to all sorts of absurdities. In TSR's module S4, *The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*, ordinary bats can bite for a single point of damage. Since most bats weigh less than a pound, and their teeth measure a fraction of an inch, these "super-bats" hardly approximate reality. If such ordinary (but dangerous) creatures commonly exist in the AD&D world, one can't help wondering how an ordinary peasant survives. Statistics in the table above make familiars a good deal more dangerous than their real-world equivalents. This can be explained by the familiars' abnormal intelligence, and their ability to attack with greater ferocity and cunning than ordinary animals of their type. Less exceptional animals should not inflict this much damage; for ordinary animals, scale the damage down by 1 point. Otherwise, clerics or druids who can conjure or summon animals will be too powerful. I recommend the unmodified values, however, for animals that are extraordinary — the results of a *reincarnate* spell, for instance, or of a druid's shape-changing

Thirty-four familiars to find

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| <p>2 Bat, large: 1"/18"; 1 pt.; superior hearing and night vision; 50% have echolocation.</p> <p>3 Bat, small: 1"/24"; 1 pt.; superior hearing, good night vision, echolocation. AC 4 in prime flying conditions (see text).</p> <p>4-5 Cat, domestic: 12"; 1-2 / 1 (rear claws 1-2); superior night vision, good hearing and olfactory senses. AC 6.</p> <p>6-7 Cat, wild: 18"; 1-2 / 1-2 / 1-2 (rear claws 1-2 / 1-2); same as domestic cat. AC 5.</p> <p>8 Civet: 12"; 1-2; same as domestic cat. AC 6.</p> <p>9 Coati: 12"; 1-2; superior olfactory senses, good hearing and night vision. AC 6.</p> <p>10 Cock: 6"/15"; nil; wide angle vision.</p> <p>11-12 Crow: 1"/36"; 1 pt.; sharp, wide-angle color vision.</p> <p>13 Dog: 15"; 1-3; good night vision, olfactory, and hearing.</p> <p>14 Fisher: 9"; 1-2; superior olfactory, good hearing & night vision. AC 6.</p> <p>15 Fox: 18"; 1-2; superior olfactory & hearing, good night vision. AC 5.</p> <p>16 Gull: 6"/24"/12"; 1 pt.; sharp, wide-angle color vision.</p> <p>17 Hare: 21"; nil; good wide-angle night vision, good hearing and olfactory.</p> <p>18 Hawk, large: 1"/33"; 1-2 / 1-2 / 1; very sharp vision. AC 6.</p> <p>19 Hawk, medium: 1"/35"; / 1 / 1; very sharp vision. AC 5.</p> <p>20 Hawk, small: 1"/36"; 1 / 1 / 1; very sharp vision. AC 5.</p> | <p>21 Kinkajou: 6"; 1-2/1-2; superior night vision, good hearing and olfactory.</p> <p>22 Lizard, large: 6"; 1 pt.; wide-angle vision.</p> <p>23 Lizard, small: 3"; nil; wide-angle vision.</p> <p>24 Monkey, large: 12"; 1 pt.; sharp color vision.</p> <p>25 Monkey, small: 9"; 1 pt.; sharp color vision.</p> <p>26 Otter: 6 "1//8"; 1-2; superior underwater and night vision, good olfactory.</p> <p>27 Owl, large: 1"/18"; 1-2 / 1-2; superior hearing and night vision.</p> <p>28 Owl, medium: 1"/18"; 1/1; superior hearing and night vision.</p> <p>29 Owl, small: 1"/18"; nil; superior hearing and night vision.</p> <p>30 Parrot: 1"/18"; nil; wide-angle color vision.</p> <p>31 Raccoon: 9"; 1-2; good night vision, hearing, and olfactory.</p> <p>32 Rat: 15"; 1 pt.; superior olfactory, good wide-angle night vision, good hearing.</p> <p>33 Raven: 1"/27"; 1-2; sharp wide-angle color vision. AC 6.</p> <p>34 Skunk: 12"; 1 pt.; good night vision, hearing, & olfactory.</p> <p>35 Snake: 9"; 1 pt.; wide-angle vision, good hearing.</p> <p>36 Squirrel: 12"; 1 pt.; sharp wide-angle vision, good hearing.</p> <p>37 Toad: 3"; nil; good wide-angle night vision.</p> <p>38 Weasel: 15"; 1 pt.; superior olfactory, good hearing and night vision. AC 6.</p> <p>39-40 Special, as per spell description.</p> |
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By necessity, a large gap in attack power exists between those animals that inflict a point of damage and those unable to do even that (with damage figures of "nil"). The gap can be narrowed if the DM considers that an attack might not be entirely without effect in game terms, even if it does no "damage." With their abnormal intelligence, familiars could probably choose tender spots for their attacks, like noses, fingertips, and eyes. Such a hit would certainly disrupt spell casting and even hinder fighters (-1 to hit) unless they take some action to remove the annoyance. Those who try to ignore a small animal's attack risk being tripped up, blinded, or thrown off balance. An opponent will find it difficult to concentrate even on physical activity with a rabbit hanging onto his thumb by its teeth, or an owl flapping in his face. However,

animals that cause no "damage" cannot slay even a helpless opponent unless ample time is available. A hawk might kill a sleeping orc, but a hare couldn't do significant damage before its victim awoke.

Sensory abilities

These powers are not quantified in the AD&D rules, but for the sake of comparison some attempt is made to do so here, since the magic-user receives sensory information from his or her familiar. These notes should also be useful if a druid chooses to shape-change into one of these forms to pick up extra information.

Hearing is described as either good (significantly better than human) or superior (the kind of hearing that locates the slightest sound at 50 paces). The ratings are a generalization, taking into account sensitivity,

audible frequency range, and ability to locate direction. Animals with good hearing have a 10 to 20 percent better chance of locating invisible or hidden creatures (based on hearing alone, when it applies) than creatures with normal hearing — depending, of course, on conditions. Those with superior hearing will be about twice as good.

Animals with olfactory (smelling) abilities

A bat's echolocation is directional, so it is possible to sneak up behind a bat.



above the human norm should have the same improved chances of noting hidden enemies as those with good hearing, depending on circumstances and on how good they are at identifying scents. In addition, those with a good sense of smell can track about half as well as a ranger. Those with superior capability can track equally as well as a ranger. The conditions under which tracking is possible, and any information gained by tracking, will of course differ for familiars and rangers, according to their physical and mental capabilities.

Visual ability involves several different aspects. All animals generally have wider fields of vision than humans, but where this is especially so it has been noted. Such animals should be harder to sneak up on, negating surprise in some situations. Color vision is present only in diurnal animals, and as a general rule, diurnal animals that are active only in dim light do not see color well, if at all. Animals that see well in poor light also tend to have poor acuity, since sharpness of vision and sensitivity to light are opposed to one another. This means that animals with sharp vision will have poorer-than-human night sight. In addition, animals with night vision will not see as clearly as a human in good light. Those animals with night vision can see either one (good) or two (superior) classes better than human on the following scale: daylight, twilight, full moon, half moon, starlight, and cloudy with no moon. By this rough measure, an owl (superior) sees as clearly under a full moon as a human does by day. Remember that there must be at least some light for night vision to be effective.

If any of an animal's sensory capabilities are not mentioned in the table, it is safe to assume that the creature in question has a performance poorer or no better a human's in that area.

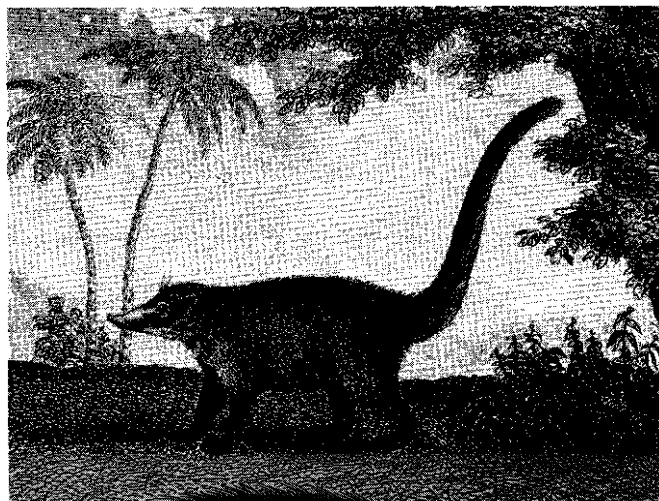
Familiar descriptions

Many of the animals named in the table represent a broad group. Even if you have knowledge of the animal that's listed, you should check the description to see what other animals may be included.

BAT: Bats that are summoned as familiars come in two sizes, according to mode of life. The smaller bats have bodies ranging from mouse-sized to rat-sized, though they look bigger with their wings fully spread. They are found in any climate that is temperate or warmer. The larger type of bat is found in the tropics, has a wingspan of about five feet, and may weigh up to two pounds.

Bats are usually some shade of brown, though they may be black or have a red or yellow tinge to their fur. Five percent of those summoned to be familiars are albinos as the spell preferentially selects them.

Most bats are able to navigate by sound — an ability known as echolocation. They produce high-pitched squeaks (or sometimes clicks) that are reflected from their surroundings, creating a fairly detailed and accurate picture of the world about them. In game terms, this ability functions in a 60' radius. Although it's not entirely logical, echolocation should not give bats an extra chance of recognizing visual illusions for what they are. The AD&D game does not allow creatures with infravision a bonus for noticing whether an illusion radiates heat, so it must be assumed that an animal with echolocation likewise receives no



Coatis are related to raccoons. With their sensitive and flexible snouts, they can detect and root out a wide variety of foods.

bonus. In addition, note that a bat's echolocation is directional, so it is possible to sneak up behind a bat.

Small bats are swift and agile in flight (maneuverability class A). For game purposes, all have echolocation. They will eat insects, or sometimes small frogs or fish or even smaller bats. They can be fed lean meat, preferably fresh. In cold climates small bats cannot fly very well or very far

(and do not get the benefit of AC 4, as specified in the table), because their wings are lightly furred at best, and they lose heat rapidly.

The larger tropical bats are clumsier and slower in flight (class B) compared to their smaller brothers. Only 50% of those that respond as familiars will have echolocation. If this ability is present, it sometimes involves tongue-clicking sounds, rather than squeaks. Tropical bats eat fruit and nuts. Like their smaller brethren, they can be sinfully ugly.

CAT: This category embraces both domestic cats and their wild cousins, ranging in size from 5 to 16 pounds. In cities and towns any cat summoned will be domestic, or at least once-domestic, as will 75% of the cats found in inhabited areas. All others summoned as familiars will be small, wild cats. Cats are found in any environment with the exception of arctic and subarctic uninhabited areas.

Wild cats are spotted or striped, or of a solid color with markings on ears and tail. They will resemble tigers, leopards, and lynxes in coloring. Cats of domestic origin will always be black, or at the option of the DM will have some unusual symbol in the pattern of their fur.

Domestic cats can only make one claw rake with their forepaws per attack, but wild cats can take a second swipe. Both gain rear claw strikes if a forepaw attack succeeds in hitting the opponent. All cats surprise their prey 4 in 6 times. They are surprised only 1 in 6 times.

Cats will eat meat of any sort, preferably fresh. Wild ones will sometimes bring down prey as large as a lamb.

CIVET: The animals in this category are tropical and subtropical carnivores that look somewhat like a cross between a cat and a weasel, with the cat predominant. They are about cat-sized, and colored much as wild cats are: with spots and stripes, or vague cloudy markings. The category includes genets, which differ from civets in that they lack scent glands and are sometimes tamed and used as mousers. In general, civets are

Fishers can swim well, and those living in areas with trees are good climbers.



quite wild and shy and will not be common near human habitations. When this result is rolled for a familiar, a genet will be summoned 100% of the time in a town or city, 50% of the time in other inhabited areas, and 10% of the time in any other area. Otherwise, the resultant familiar will be a civet.

All of these animals can climb well, though their claws are not as sharp and fully retractile as a cat's. They are less carnivorous than cats, but thrive on meat. Once a week civets (not including genets) can exude a foul musk that has the same effect on those nearby as a troglodyte's odor (see the Monster Manual).

COATI: These animals are related to raccoons, and are somewhat similar to them in appearance and behavior, though they have long, snoutlike noses and long, slender tails. They usually hold their tails straight up, perpendicular to their bodies. Coatis are native to most kinds of terrain in tropical and subtropical climates. Adults weigh as much as large cats. Coatis are more terrestrial than raccoons, and though they can manage greater bursts of speed than raccoons, they are not as good at handling objects or climbing. With their sensitive and flexible snouts, they can detect and root out a wide variety of foods.

COCK: This term identifies a male bird of the group of pheasants and pheasant-like birds that includes the common chicken. These birds are found in any temperate to tropical area that offers cover. Those summoned to be familiars will be about the size of an ordinary pheasant, and jet black. If domestic birds are summoned, they will represent one of the smaller, more agile breeds, such as the bantam. Always in towns and cities, and 50% of the time in other inhabited areas, the summoned cock familiar will be domestic.

All of these birds are class C fliers and haven't much endurance (four rounds of flight at most). They are omnivores, but greens and grains make up the bulk of their diet.

CROW: This category covers most of the medium-sized birds of the genus *Corvus*, including common crows, fish crows, carrion crows, rooks, and so on — but not ravens. Crows are found in any climate from subarctic to tropical, in all but the most barren of wastelands. They do not fear human habitations. They measure about 1½ feet from beak to tip of tailfeathers. Crows are black, sometimes with white markings. They are good mimics, and as familiars they can convey messages of three words or less, though they can in no way speak coherently or understand language

without magical aid. Crows do well on a varied diet much like that of humans, though they enjoy insects a good deal more. They are class A fliers. During daylight conditions, they are never surprised. If a crow's hit succeeds, it may (10% chance) blind the opponent's eye.

DOG: In inhabited areas, the summoned dog is one of the smaller sorts — a skinny mongrel with wary eyes, the "thievish" dog of early classifications that by its appearance supports the theory that domestic dogs carry a strain of jackal. In tropical and subtropical areas away from human habitation, the animal summoned will be a true wild dog of appropriate size. Dogs will not be found outside tropical and subtropical areas unless human dwellings are nearby.

Dogs of domestic origin will be black, pied, or brown with a yellow or reddish tint. Wild dogs will be brindled or plain in pattern. Those summoned to be familiars will be the size of a large fox or small jackal, but with more powerful jaws. In packs they can bring down deer, but these dogs take small game as a general rule. Wild or domestic, dogs will eat nearly anything, though they prefer ripe meat.

FISHER: This category encompasses all of the larger weasel-like animals, including the fisher, plus the larger martens and the mongooses. All are similar in habits and appearance, though they aren't close

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relatives. The fisher family described here inhabits all climates but the arctic, preferring to avoid dense settlements. Mongooses are predominantly found in tropical and subtropical areas, while the others inhabit cooler climates.

All of these animals tip the scale at 2-16 pounds. They measure 2-4 feet in length. The animals can swim well, and those living in areas with trees are good climbers. All are exclusively carnivorous, unlike most animals called "carnivores." Some mongooses are exclusively diurnal, but these will not respond to the *find familiar* spell.

FOX: When a fox becomes a familiar, in temperate climates it is usually of the common red fox variety. Still, foxes can be found everywhere, even in the high arctic. Color of coat and shape of ears and face may vary, but all foxes weigh between 4 and 15 pounds, although their long fur and tails sometimes give them a heftier appearance.

Foxes are swift and canny in the hunt, whether the pursuer or the pursued. They have been known to outrun wolves, and few other carnivores can match their endurance. A surprisingly good climbing ability complements their speed. Foxes eat meat and insects primarily, but they will accept some vegetable matter. Like dogs, they seem to prefer a well-rotted meal.

GULL: Birds of this sort that respond to the *find familiar* spell are not the ordinary

beachgoers; they're black. In arctic waters, the summoned bird will be the dark, gull-like skua. Gull familiars always represent the larger birds in their family; small gulls, like those resembling terns, will not be summoned. Gull familiars have wingspans of 4 to 5½ feet, and measure 1½ to 2 feet from beak to tail. Birds matching this description exist worldwide, inhabiting areas within 50 miles of any coastline and near any large inland body of water.

Although these familiars are skilled at flying long distances over water, they are not particularly agile (class C fliers). Gulls can swim, but only on the water's surface. They eat anything from worms and turnips to carrion and snails, but their favorite entree is fish.

HARE: The hare, with its reputation for sly tricks, is not uncommonly thought to have magical properties. Those summoned by a magic-user are black in color, and abnormally large.

Hares are lankier and leggier than rabbits. They can muster impressive speed over short distances, and perform prodigious leaps (up to 20') at need. The animals have no effective means of attack. They can survive on nearly any sort of vegetable matter, including the juicy parts of bark and twigs. They inhabit the lands from the arctic to the tropics, but they do not live in heavy forests. Their ears are abnormally large, not for collecting sound, but for

radiating body heat — a necessary function, because the animals do not sweat or pant.


HAWK: The hawk family, as used here, covers the daytime raptors, from large soaring hawks to comparatively puny sparrowhawks. For game purposes, the birds are classified in three groups according to size. The first class, covering the largest birds, includes the soaring hawks known as buzzards or buzzards, plus the largest falcons. The second class, for midsized birds, covers falcons such as the peregrine, plus smaller buzzards, and midsized accipiters such as the cooper's hawk. Larger kites also qualify for the midsized class. The third class, for the smallest birds, includes the small kites and accipiters, as well as the smallest falcons.

The hawk group's habitat covers the world over, although some restrictions apply. In subtropical and tropical areas, half of the small and midsized hawks are kites. In arctic areas, only the two larger classifications are present.

All hawks usually have gray or brown feathers combined with white. Darker markings are predominant. Kites are generally white.

Large hawks are class B fliers; midsized and small hawks are class A. When diving, all hawks are +2 to hit, and are considered charging for game purposes, thus risking a nasty death should an intended victim manage to break the bird's dive with his spearpoint. To make a dive, the hawk must

BODY WOUND 53



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54



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have at least 60' of clearance above the target. If this space is available, all hawks can dive to inflict an extra point of damage with each of their talons, but they cannot strike with their beaks at the end of a dive.

To capture prey, hawks use their speed and keen sight. Their prey ranges from rabbits and pheasants to insects. If an target's eyes are unprotected, a beak attack has a 15% chance of blinding one eye. As familiars, they take meat, preferably fresh, for their ration. Hawks are never surprised.

KINKAJOU: These are nocturnal and arboreal animals related to the raccoon. They inhabit tropical and subtropical areas. Although they move slowly on the ground, these animals are good climbers, and they are native only to wooded areas. With their plush brown fur, nimble paws, and prehensile tails, kinkajous seem rather like monkeys. But though their hand-like paws can manipulate objects, they do not exhibit the dexterity most monkeys do. Kinkajous are omnivores. They favor fruit and insects, but familiars also like meat.

LIZARD: The many types of lizards that are suited for life as a familiar are divided into two categories by size: large (3-16

pounds), but all are grotesque in form. In tropical areas, half of the small lizards summoned will be abnormally large geckos — nocturnal lizards with very good night vision. Geckos can ascend or descend any surface rougher than polished glass without difficulty. In tropical forested areas, 25% of the respondents to a *find familiar* summons will be chameleons, with all the qualities of their larger brothers as described above.

humans are. Such an ability requires mental as well as physical skill, so although monkeys might learn to handle simple switches and latches, they cannot wield tools or weapons efficiently, even if an attempt is made to train them.

Monkeys that are summoned to be familiars are primarily omnivores; some of the smaller ones are insectivores. All can be fed fruit, nuts, vegetables, and some meat.



Otters are good swimmers, and can remain underwater for up to 7 rounds.

The appearance of small lizards varies according to their environment, but all are grotesque in form.



pounds) and small (2 pounds or less — still a respectable size). Large lizards are limited to tropical areas. Small lizards also inhabit subtropical climates.

Large lizards are typically long and slender, and they can move quite rapidly for a reptile. These athletic lizards can sprint at 15" for up to 2 rounds, and they swim well. This group includes the monitor lizards and those which resemble them. If they score a hit with their jaws, they can bring their claws into play, and if they consequently score a strike, they'll do a further point of damage. In forested areas, a large chameleon (though this animal is not usually considered part of the lizard group) will respond to the summoning 25% of the time. A chameleon moves no faster than 3", but in natural surroundings it can camouflage itself as well as a pseudodragon does (80% chance of success). Chameleons are good climbers, but slow at it. Large lizards vary in length from 2-4 feet, depending on build and overall weight. They take prey as small as a mouse and as large as a dove, and they will not eat carrion.

Lizards belonging to the smaller category are 1 foot or more in length; if on the shorter side, they are of great girth. Their appearance varies according to their envi-

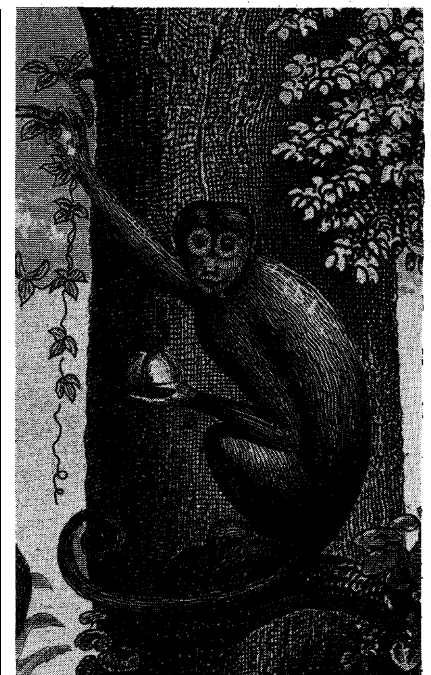
ronment, but all are grotesque in form. Small lizards eat anything from large insects to mice. They can be fed lean meat.

MONKEY: The family of monkeys includes all primates of a size that's suitable for familiars. There are two categories: small, including those of squirrel-size or smaller, weighing 2 pounds or less, and large, which weigh up to 16 pounds. The sorts of monkeys that become familiars only inhabit the tropics.

Small monkeys include marmosets, squirrel monkeys, diurnal lemurs, and the like. Half of those summoned will be nocturnal, e.g. galagos, tarsiers, and small night monkeys. These animals cannot distinguish colors, but make up for it with good night vision. All small monkeys are expert climbers and leapers.

Large monkeys include some of the bigger lemurs, small langurs, and others of similar size. Capuchin monkeys, known for their work with organ-grinders, typify this group. Macaques, baboons, and gibbons are too large to serve as familiars. Of the large monkeys, 15% are nocturnal.

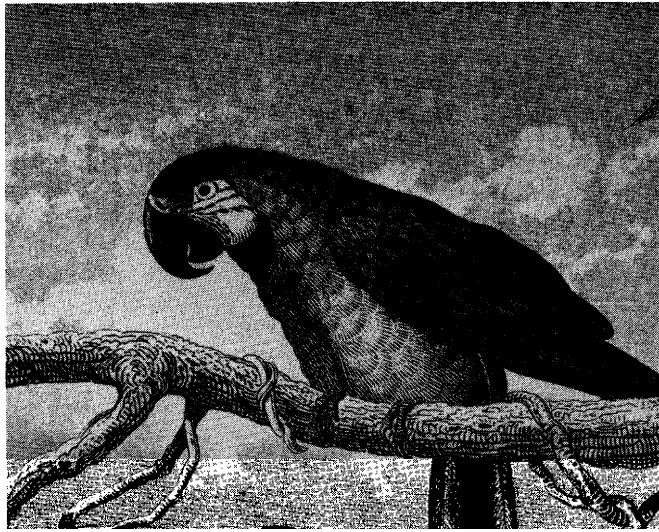
A magic-user who summons a monkey has gained an extra pair of hands — two pairs, if you count the feet. But monkeys are not as proficient at manual tasks as



Although monkeys might learn to handle simple switches and latches, they cannot wield tools or weapons efficiently.

OTTER: Otters live wherever water supports fish and crustaceans — in streams, lakes, and swamps, and at seashores. Native climates range from subarctic to tropical. Otters are good swimmers, and can remain underwater for up to 7 rounds, 5 when active. In most respects, otters resemble their close relatives, the fishers and the weasels. Any characteristics described for the fishers also apply to the otter, except for

Parrots climb well, using beak and claws. The arrangement of their toes enables them to handle objects.



climbing ability. (Otters can't climb.) Although otters can grow very large, otter familiars never exceed 16 pounds in weight. Otters prefer crustaceans to fish, but they do well on any meat diet.

OWL: For game purposes, owls fall into three size categories. The largest birds grow to the size of a great horned owl, mid-sized owls are as big as barn owls, and small owls are no larger than a screech owl. Owls live in all climates and on all sorts of terrain, except for small owls, which never inhabit the arctic.

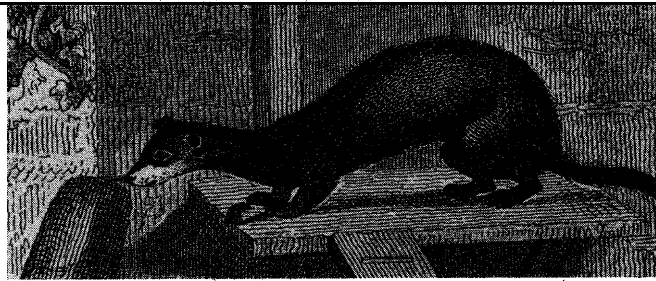
Most owls hunt at night, but in arctic, subarctic, and open areas, 30% of the owls are diurnal. Diurnal owls possess the same sensory powers as hawks.

No owl has a good sense of smell. In fact, owls are so insensitive to odors that they will hunt skunks. In the AD&D game, not even a troglodyte's odor affects an owl.

Owls have yellow or green eyes and feathers of somber colors. Some arctic owls are an exception, having bright white feathers with black markings. Owls are class B fliers, but they are swift and especially agile, able to move in complete silence. Their feathers are soft, and can muffle the sounds of flight.

PARROT: A bird of this sort that serves as a familiar is neither brightly colored nor delicate. Instead, these are the more somber birds of their kind: black macaws, African gray parrots, or the kea of New Zealand, for example. They only inhabit tropical and subtropical areas. As class B fliers, parrots maneuver with fair ability, but exhibit no exceptional talent. They climb well, however, using beak and claws. The arrangement of their toes enables them to handle objects. As familiars, they can "speak" as crows do. They will eat fruit and nuts, as well as some meat. Those with a predatory tendency relish fat, and at least one parrot, the kea, is said to attack young and helpless sheep.

RACCOON: These animals need no introduction to those living in the Americas,



Weasels measure only 1 or 2 feet in length, but they are still renowned for their ferocity.

Owls are swift and especially agile, able to move in complete silence.



where they are found in all climates and terrains that are warmer than subarctic. Tropical raccoons look thinner than their northern kin, but the difference is mostly fur. Although these little, bear-like creatures may weigh up to 50 pounds as adults, some full-grown specimens weigh as little as 3 pounds. Those summoned to be familiars will be no heavier than 16 pounds. Raccoons are good swimmers and climbers. Their dextrous paws can handle simple latches, buttons, and handles, though not as well as a monkey's hands would. Raccoons welcome a wide range of foods, a fact of which most farmers are well aware.

RAT: Rats and their rat-like cousins, including a few species of opossum, live everywhere except in some areas with arctic climates; they'll even invade these if a per-

manent human settlement exists there. Rat familiars are large, but they do not approach the size of the giant rats from the Monster Manual, which seem to be as large as a small to mid-sized dog (according to the damage they do).

Rats are not especially fast, but they climb and swim very well. Given time, they can gnaw through ropes, cords, and even wooden barriers. They eat virtually everything, but treat new foods with suspicion. Of these, they'll take nothing but the tiniest nibble. If afterwards they feel ill, they'll avoid anything with the same or a similar taste. The rat's famed ability to avoid poisons stems from its habits and its good sense of smell.

A rat bite has a 10% chance of infecting the victim with a serious disease, unless a save vs. poison is made.

RAVEN: These are large members of the crow family. They can be found nearly everywhere, though they tend to avoid populated areas. They are usually gray or black, and have the same vocal talents as common crows. Ravens are largely predatory, but as omnivores, they'll eat whatever is available. Farmers commonly accuse them of harassing or killing livestock, and they are well known for following armies. (Dead soldiers make good meals.) Like crows, ravens are never surprised in lighted conditions, and a hit by a raven's beak has a 10% chance of blinding an eye.

SKUNK: These animals are common in temperate to tropical regions. Those that become familiars are the size of a small cat, but they have weaker jaws than a cat. Their fur is black with white markings. According to Monster Manual II, skunks can release a 1" x 1" x 1" stinking cloud of musk, which requires all victims in range to make a saving throw vs. poison. Those who succeed must retreat immediately or be considered to have failed the save. Those who fail will be nauseated for 1-4 rounds and must retreat and retch. Each must also save again vs. poison or also be blinded for 1-4 rounds. Normal clothing that contacts the musk must be burned or buried. Flesh, leather, metal, etc., must be washed repeatedly for several days to remove the stench. (Vinegar cuts the smell in 2-3 washings.) Skunks are omnivores, and particularly relish insects.

SNAKE: Snakes that become familiars are not the average grass snake or garter snake; they're large serpents up to five feet long. These snakes inhabit temperate to

tropical areas and are typically small boas or pythons, although large individuals of other species may be found. Snakes can maintain top speed over very difficult terrain, and they're good climbers and swimmers. None of the snake familiars are venomous, but all are predatory. They generally eat such things as rats and frogs, though as familiars they will accept raw meat. Once transformed to familiars, these snakes are immune to common clerical spells that affect their kind.

SQUIRREL: Squirrel familiars are large, black, and always tree-dwellers. They inhabit any area with trees. Squirrels are swift for their size and can ascend or descend rough wooden surfaces easily. They are excellent climbers and leapers. Like rats, they can gnaw through most organic materials. Squirrels eat fruit, nuts, grain, and sometimes insects.

TOAD: The lowly toad is found in any climate but arctic and subarctic, and it will even inhabit desert areas, though this is uncommon. Toad familiars are 6 or more inches long and almost as wide. The largest weigh a pound or more. Toads are usually covered with bumps and tubercles known as "warts," and though most have a drab appearance, some of the tropical species are colorful. Toads can hop up to 7', swim well, and remain underwater almost indefinitely if they must. They eat insects, but larger



Snakes can maintain top speed over very difficult terrain, and they're good climbers and swimmers.

WEASEL: "Weasel" is broadly used here, as was "fisher" previously. That is, several animals are grouped under this heading for game purposes. In subarctic to subtropical climates, the family includes weasels and their similar-sized kin: stoats, ferrets, polecats, mink, and all the rest. In tropical areas, the term applies to the smaller members of the mongoose clan. Members of this expanded weasel family even inhabit cities, where they may be kept as ratters. The ferret, in fact, is a domestic species. All "weasels" measure only 1 or 2 feet in length, tail included, but they are

a penchant for attacking an opponent's throat. Except as mentioned here, they resemble their larger relatives, the fishers.

Adding new familiars

The preceding list of familiars includes most of the world's contemporary animals that would make suitable familiars in the game. DMs may see fit to add completely imaginary creatures as well, using the animals above for comparison. Or DMs may modify the list to accommodate other environments in which AD&D characters may find themselves. For example, in the age of

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animals above would not be present, but mammals of badger size and smaller were present throughout that era. Instead of bats, there would be flying reptiles, probably adapted to daytime flight. There might also be very small animals related to the dinosaurs — bipedal, with good day vision and rapid movement (15"), able to bite for up to 1-3 points of damage depending on size.

If your adventure takes place away from the Prime Material Plane, the normal animal-like inhabitants (if any) would probably be ill-adapted to an adventurer's needs, even if they responded to a call. Natives of the elemental planes, for instance, would find conditions on the Prime Material Plane uncomfortable at best.

Encumbrance

Sometimes a familiar must be carried. Perhaps it is wounded or immobilized, or maybe its master simply wants to plant a rear lookout in his backpack. Whatever the reason, toting one's familiar requires knowledge of its encumbrance value.

For the sake of simplicity, all small familiars are considered to have an "encumbrance value" of 100 gp when carried, medium and large-sized familiars 200. These values increase by 50% if the animal is "dead" weight. Included in these estimates are any special arrangements made for carrying the familiar. Weasels and the like can hide under a magician's robes, but a cat is another matter. Certainly some sort

of protection will be required to carry even the most cooperative of hawks — perhaps a leather guard like falconers use.

Raining cats and coatis: falling damage

All of the familiars in this article are small, so they should take little damage from a fall. This is because the strength of their bones and flesh is greater in proportion to their weight than in humans. In addition, a familiar's body has a greater surface area in proportion to its weight. Therefore, it will reach terminal velocity — the point at which air resistance prevents a further increase in falling speed — much sooner than a human body.

The upshot of all these assertions is that a rat can probably survive a fall from the roof of a house (and may even be undamaged by the experience), but a man will take damage and might not survive — and a horse would almost certainly perish. Applying these laws to the AD&D system could prove tiresome, and more complicated than it's worth. But since familiars are so important to magic-users, it's only fair to give the matter *some* consideration. Small animals should receive 0-3 points of damage (1d4 -1) from a fall of 20 feet or less and another 1-3 points (½d6, rounded down) for each additional 20 feet, up to a maximum of 6d3.

Intelligence and death

Little consideration has been in this article given to what an animal gains by

becoming a familiar. It's been mentioned that some become hardier in combat, but the animal may also gain intelligence. The *find familiar* spell states that animal familiars are "abnormally intelligent." Even the most abnormally intelligent toad is a dull lump compared to a mouse, so it seems fair that all normal familiars be raised to a standard level of intelligence; otherwise, it will be a great disadvantage to have certain kinds of familiars. All familiars, then, gain an intelligence rating of 4 (the highest semi-intelligent rating), plus some limited ability to plan for the future as humans do. Such intelligence will be qualitatively different from that of humans and demi-humans, however; these animals will not be able to learn speech, not as a human would understand it, anyway.

The Players Handbook states that a magic-user loses twice the number of hit points possessed by his familiar if the familiar is ever "killed." This is due to the tremendous shock caused by unnatural death — but when a familiar dies of old age, there is no penalty to the magic-user. Unfortunately for the familiar, the reverse is not true. When a magic-user dies, for whatever reason, the familiar attached to that magic-user dies, too. This explains why familiars are "absolutely faithful." Indirectly causing or allowing a master to die means suicide for a familiar; therefore, the health and well-being of a familiar's master should be the creature's utmost concern. ¶

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