



Alien Space Bats

for *GURPS Fourth Edition*

by Matt Riggsby

The alien space bats, known to long-time alien-watchers and conspiracy theorists as ASBs, may not be the most dangerous or hostile of alien species, but they are by far the most annoying. When history takes strange turns, when people attempt the impractical or impossible, and particularly when they succeed, you can bet that the alien space bats are behind it.

They resemble nothing more than earthly bats, only approximately human-sized. They're actually a bit smaller on average than humans, but are also relatively smart and agile. They have four limbs, two of which are arms. They are entirely capable of flight. However, they can't make effective use of their hands while airborne. Their vision is poor, which they partially make up for with a sonar sense.

Their power lies in their advanced technology (particularly strong in stealth, teleportation, and other areas which allow them to manipulate situations from afar) and their limited powers of mind control. Although most ASBs are incapable of directly controlling a human mind, they are all capable of implanting powerful suggestions, making people believe things which are patently false, or at least poorly thought-out. A small minority of "Master" ASBs can go so far as to assume direct control of individuals, making them behave as desired. The Master ASBs, by the way, are the acknowledged leaders of ASB society. Since they have mind control powers, they'd probably take charge anyway, so the ASBs have done the sensible thing and let them have it.

ASBs prefer to remain in the background, never taking part in any confrontations but rather manipulating others as pawns. They will induce mass delusions, secretly grant entirely novel technologies, manipulate climate, or take control of powerful leaders of lower-tech worlds from orbiting spacecraft or secure locations. If attacked directly, they will nevertheless have the full range of arms and armaments available at their TL. As a last resort, their favored hand-to-hand weapon is a large, well-balanced club (we'll pause here for you to fill in the punch line). There is no known ASB home planet. Whether they originated in space or they had a home planet which is now lost or destroyed, the ASBs are aliens wherever they go.

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ASBs in the Campaign

It's not clear why the ASBs act as they do. It's generally believed that they're intensely curious about "lower" life forms and are interested in performing a wide range of experiments on them to see how their societies react. It's not impossible, though, that there's a more sinister purpose behind their actions.

As a power-behind-the-scenes, the ASBs are well-suited to campaigns with hidden truths, where they can be just one conspiracy among many. They can also be used to smooth over any kind of implausibility, if the GM needs to provide a justification. For example, in a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*-style campaign, why don't people acknowledge the existence of the monsters eating their friends and relatives on a nightly basis? It's the ASBs!

Their ideal use, though, may be to paper over the cracks of an older conspiracy campaign where the GM has, perhaps, lost control of multiple threads of secrets and secret societies. If PCs start to piece things together and realize that various groups are acting irrationally, it may be because they *are* acting irrationally. They're under the influence of the Alien Space Bats, compelled to believe in a hollow earth, the Holy Grail, capitalism, communism, and other absurd ideas.

And it doesn't have to end there. There could easily be factions among the ASBs, experimenting on one another and making each other believe unreasonable things. It might be that the whole of ASB society is deluded, with every ASB under the influence of another, also deluded, ASB.

Alien Space Bats (149 points)

Attributes: ST -2 [-20]; IQ +1 [20]; DX +1 [+20]; HT -1 [-10]

Advantages: Affliction, 3 levels (Severe Delusion, +15%; 30x duration +60%; Malediction, long range modifiers, 200%) [113]; Flight (Winged -25%, Temporary Disadvantage: No Manipulators -50%) [10]; High Technology +3 [15]; Scanning Sense (Sonar, increased range 5x,+30%) [26]

Disadvantages: Bad Sight (nearsighted) [-25]

Most ASBs have skills related to work in outer space: piloting, engineering, zero-g operations, etc. However, none are prevalent enough to justify adding them to the template.

In high-tech campaigns, the GM may replace the High Technology advantage with an Unusual Background allowing the ASBs access to technologies otherwise not available. ASB nearsightedness is not subject to a Mitigator, so they get full points for it regardless of TI. The cost of High

Alien What, Now?

For those of you not in on the joke, "alien space bats" is a term used to describe the convoluted rationalizations necessary to justify one's pet speculations. The term appears to have originated with the late Alison Brooks in the soc.history.what-if Usenet newsgroup in 1998. In the course of debunking of the possibility of a successful Operation Sealion, it was suggested that alien space bats could have made a Nazi invasion of Britain successful. Since then it has come to signify any implausible background assumption. The term was intended as a rhetorical device, not a specific sort of entity, but that's not going to stop us. If there's something in a campaign which, on reflection, makes no sense, the alien space bats are probably behind it.

is not subject to a Mitigator, so they get full points for it regardless of TL. The cost of High Technology assumes a campaign where the base TL is at least 6. ASBs need to be at least TL 9 (without easy interplanetary or interstellar travel, they'd be hard-pressed to be aliens, now, wouldn't they?), so in a lower-tech campaign, increase the level of High Technology as appropriate.

Master Bats have Possession (Telecontrol +50%) [150] and are likely to have high levels of Rank or Status.

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