

THUNDERSCAPE™

THE WORLD OF ADEN



THUNDERSCAPE WORLD 07

The Insect Riders of Kyan

PATHFINDER
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE



THE WORLD OF ADEN ORIGINALLY CREATED BY SHANE LACY HENSLEY

Thunderscape World 7:

THE INSECT RIDERS OF KYAN

Written by Shawn Carman



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Thunderscape World 7: The Insect Riders of Kyan

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THE INSECT RIDERS OF KYAN



Each nation has its icons, those images that spring to mind when the average citizen of the Known Lands, no matter how distant, thinks of the people of that nation. Arasteen has its Radiant Knights in their gleaming armor, Urbana has the Thunder Trains, Vanora has its dragon-bedecked samurai warriors... all are known and admired, but none are as bizarre and captivating as the Swarmers of Kyan, the fabled insect riders who defend their homeland from all enemies atop giant insects of varying types. Romanticized in countless plays and works of fiction, at least before the Darkfall when such things were more common, many have sought to understand more about these strange and near-mythical figures. To understand them, however, one must understand Kyan.

THE NATION OF KYAN



Like many modern nations, Kyan did not exist prior to the Peace of the Rose, the legendary accord that finally ended the Great War that had ravaged the Known Lands for more than four centuries. Prior to that time, the region now occupied by Kyan was not part of any particular kingdom or monarchy, although it had been contested at various times during the Great War. Simply put, no one desired to control it for long despite its abundant resources; it was simply too dangerous and too labor intensive to manage control for more than a short period due to its bizarre geography.

For as long as anyone can remember or any existing historical records (which admittedly are quite scant), the lands of Kyan have been covered with a vast, dense overgrowth known as the Crawling Jungle. The jungle is perhaps the most lush and diverse region of natural growth in the known lands, rivaled only slightly by the jungles found on some islands in the Misland Republics. For equally unknown reasons, the ecology of the jungle has developed in such a way that the insect life has grown to enormous size and become the dominant form of life in an environment already fraught with large, dangerous beasts. Although giant insects exist elsewhere in the Known Lands, even in the jungles of the Mislands, nowhere else have they been able to ascend to such levels of dominance, and the reasons why such a thing has occurred in Kyan have been the subject of much academic study over the centuries.

During the heyday of the Great War, when tribes, kingdoms, and even races were being wiped from the face of the world by the ferocity of the conflict, a powerful dwarven druid grew weary of the terrible toll that the war was taking upon the land and vowed to find a way to protect it. Gathering together those of a like mind, either those devoted to the land or those merely weary of fighting, the druid traveled to a location where there were none who claimed sovereignty. The Crawling Jungle was the perfect location for their purposes, and the dwarf and her followers took residence there. The druid had an unusual affinity for the insects, remarkable even for a druid, and she soon managed to establish a stronghold where she and those who followed her were able live in harmony with the insects and live free of war. The druid's name is not remembered primarily because, within a matter of a year or two, those

who flocked to her banner took to calling her the Queen Mother both for her relationship with the giant insects and her maternal nature with them and her people. She turned away none who desired peace in place of war, and when the invitations to the accords at Rose began to be sent out, the Queen Mother received one. To the surprise of her people, she accepted. Her arrival in Rose atop an armored beetle of prodigious size served both as a means of gaining the attention of others toward her legitimacy, and as an understated threat toward any who might consider harm toward her or her people.

The Accords of Rose determined the boundaries of many modern nations of the Known Lands, a roster to which a handful of others have been added in the thousand years since that time. Alone among the leaders of men assembled at the accords, the Queen Mother had no complicated desires regarding resources or specific regions of land that she desired dominion over. Her claim was both simple and non-negotiable: she wanted the Crawling Jungle and the lands it touched, including the mountains in the east and the small number of islands off the southern coasts. Given that her people already occupied these lands, as well as the fact that the jungle had proven extremely treacherous and difficult to control for any length of time, the other assembled rulers were more than happy to concede such holdings to the Queen Mother, many of them perhaps contemplating beneficial trade agreements for things that could not be found within the jungle. If any held these desires, they would prove to be utterly disappointed, for the Queen Mother left the accords without signing any trade agreements, and never did during the remainder of her rule, which lasted more than a century after Rose.

Since its inception all those centuries ago, Kyan has proven a remarkably self-sufficient nation, thriving during times when other nations struggled with drought and famine because of the nature of the relationship between the nation's people and its lands. While individual merchants or settlements have maintained trade relations with outsiders, the nation as a whole has not, because there is nothing that they require that cannot be taken from the land. Although many of the first Queen Mother's descendants were druids, not all were, and eventually her dynasty came to an end when one of her great-great-grandchildren perished without an heir. Nevertheless, Kyan has a higher population of druids than most other nations, many of whom are in service to the throne. Their ability to exist in harmony with nature has allowed Kyan to benefit from the bounty of the land in a manner that no other nation has been able to achieve. Those settlements within Kyan that choose not to pay homage to the Queen Mother are the ones that predominantly conduct trade with outsiders.

Kyan is unique in that the Queen Mother does not claim dominion over all who dwell within its borders. The Crawling Jungle is hers, of that there can be no question, but the land can be used by those bold enough to make the attempt. Accordingly, any settlements or individuals who make their home within the jungle have the choice to pay homage and swear allegiance to the throne and be true citizens of Kyan. Those who choose not to are not punished for their choice, but nor does the Queen offer her assistance; they are on their own, presumably just as they wish to be.

MAJOR SETTLEMENTS

High Hive

LN Large City

Corruption +4; Crime +0; Economy +1; Law +5; Lore +5; Society -1

Qualities Academic, Magically Attuned, Rumormongering Citizens, Strategic Location, Tourist Attraction

Danger +10

Demographics

Government Overlord (Benevolent Monarchy)

Population 22,684 (56% human, 12% ferran, 9% elf, 8% faerkin, 15% other)

Notable NPCs (Excluding notable personages listed later)

Minister of Commerce Chudra Kalan (male dwarven expert 10)

Master of the Caratect Guild Sylene Terao (female elf sorcerer 11)

Marketplace

Base Value 12,000 gp; Purchase Limit 60,000 gp; Spellcasting 9th

Minor Items 4d4; Medium Items 3d4; Major Items 2d4

The capitol of Kyan is also its largest hive city, and a true marvel of insectile engineering. The terraced dome of the city can be seen from miles in all directions, as can the constant traffic of massive flying insects leaving and arriving at its uppermost levels. The lower levels are no less busy, with large insects carrying various cargoes coming

through dozens of portals into the hive itself. The middle levels, which comprise the majority of the hive, do not include any significant number of portals, as they are the armored center that reflects the city's overwhelming defenses. The wealthiest individuals have luxury homes that rest on the exterior walls, and they possess insect servants that can both carve openings and secrete new chitin to seal them when the moment has passed.

High Hive is the center of Kyan in many ways, although geographically is not one of them. It is the home of the Queen Mother and her royal court, such as it is. As such, it is also the headquarters of both the Home Guard and the Swarm, with a larger military concentration than anywhere else in the nation. A precise estimate is not available, but most believe that fully half of the entire Kyan military is stationed within High Hive at all times. The city is also home to the Academia Entomologia, simultaneously the most elite and notorious magical institution in the nation. It was founded by the queen's brother, and unquestionably produces some of the most skilled and powerful arcanists in Kyan, but the methods and theories espoused by those who hold power there are somewhat controversial among a large percentage of the spellcasters who frequent the Crawling Jungle.

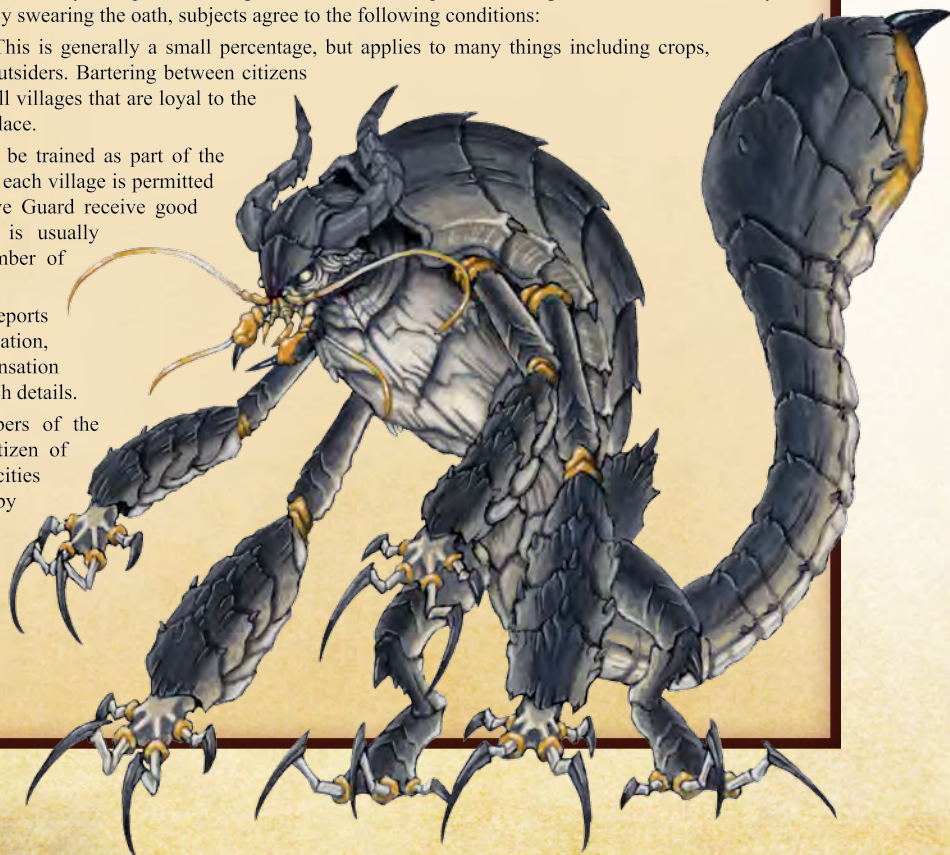
Although the insect training centers of Crichton are larger, the ones in High Hive are perhaps the most prestigious and certainly the oldest. Most of the ones in Crichton are outgrowths of the original training centers in High Hive, and the wealthiest citizens in Kyan still claim prestige by having insect mounts or other servants that are from High Hive. This is equally true of the schools where the insect wranglers are taught the secret techniques of their professions; most master wranglers at the schools and training centers in Crichton were educated in High Hive. And while these are the most important educational institutions in Kyan, they are by no means the only ones. Any type of education, even something as antithetical to Kyan lifestyle as mechamagic, can

The Oath to the Queen Mother

The oath of loyalty that individuals and settlements within the Crawling Jungle have the option of swearing in order to become true citizens of Kyan is a simple matter, but nevertheless is unique in the Known Lands. No other monarch is known to have ever permitted others to dwell within his or her lands without demanding their fealty. The practice is regarded with some skepticism among other nations, but for Kyan it has worked for centuries without problem. By swearing the oath, subjects agree to the following conditions:

- ✦ Annual tithes are paid to the throne. This is generally a small percentage, but applies to many things including crops, monetary transactions, and trades with outsiders. Bartering between citizens of Kyan is not taxed, ensuring many small villages that are loyal to the throne have a robust system of barter in place.
- ✦ A percentage of each settlement must be trained as part of the Home Guard. This is not conscription, as each village is permitted to choose who attends the training. Hive Guard receive good equipment and ample supplies, so it is usually not difficult to secure an adequate number of volunteers.
- ✦ Each settlement must submit annual reports including careful accounts of population, resources, defenses, the number and dispensation of all craftsmen, and a variety of other such details.

In return for these concessions, members of the settlement are afforded the rights of a citizen of Kyan, including freedom to access the hive cities without supervision and to be defended by the Home Guard and the Swarmers if their settlements come under attack. Settlements that are large enough have a barracks constructed to house a small contingent of Home Guard soldiers to serve as guardians and law enforcement. Smaller settlements are typically afforded only a single magistrate to serve the same purpose.



be gained in High Hive, and many of Kyan's noble families send their young sons and daughters to be educated in High Hive, even after the Darkfall has crippled so much else of the nation.

Some have claimed that there is no significant pursuit of art within Kyan, and if one takes into account only traditional art forms, that statement might be true. Others, however, might observe that High Hive itself is virtually a work of art, because the craft of caratecture, the art of shaping carapace for both function and form, is practiced extensively within the city. Virtually every public space, every private estate, contains extensively shaped carapace in the form of furniture, weapons, sculpture, fountains, building fronts, signage, and anything else that one can imagine.

Crichton

LN Large City

Corruption +2; Crime +0; Economy +5; Law +1; Lore +3; Society +1
Qualities Famed Breeders, Insular, Planned Community, Racially Intolerant (Ilithix), Strategic Location
Danger +10

Demographics

Government Autocrat
Population 23,712 (62% human, 11% ferran, 9% jurak, 7% faerkin, 11% other)

Notable NPCs

 (Excluding notable personages listed later)

Governor Elect Kalila Denul (female ferran predator (jaguar) summoner 9)
Home Guard Commander Aarelle Roshan (female jurak fighter 10)

Marketplace

Base Value 8,800 gp; Purchase Limit 50,000 gp; Spellcasting 7th
Minor Items 4d4; Medium Items 3d4; Major Items 2d4

Most outsiders consider Crichton secondary to High Hive in most if not all respects, and in truth many other citizens of Kyan believe much the same thing. The people of Crichton are aware of this perception, and bear a great deal of resentment toward any and all who hold it. In their eyes, theirs is a proud and noble city, rich in tradition and offerings of its own, and any who claim otherwise will find a rather icy reception awaiting them wherever they happen to conduct their affairs within its carapace-hardened walls.

As the only other true hive city in Kyan, it is perhaps natural that people would compare Crichton to High Hive, but it is a grossly unfair comparison to make. The settlement that would eventually become High Hive has its origins before the Peace of the Rose, which was signed more than one thousand years ago. Crichton, by contrast, is less than five centuries old, and thus has had hundreds of years less to develop. Despite this, Crichton is very nearly the size of High Hive, and has benefited from construction materials and techniques that were not yet created when the capital was founded. In many ways, Crichton is a stronger, greater fortress than the capital has ever been despite its marginally smaller size, but even those who call it home are loath to say such a thing when outsiders might hear; even the most adamant among their number has no wish to offend their beloved queen.

Crichton is a remarkably militant city, with much of its resources and populace given over to military pursuits. A third of the nation's military is stationed within the city; while less than High Hive controls, the remaining fifth of the army that is not stationed at either hive frequently uses Crichton as a point of rest and resupply during their patrol rotations, meaning that the population is closer to that of High Hive than most realize. To accommodate such a robust military, there are a multitude of insect wranglers and schools where those who train the beasts are themselves taught the methods they use. There are a disproportionate number of smiths within the city as well, both in the traditional

sense of blacksmiths and armorsmiths as well as a large number of caratects who fashion the same products from carapace and other insect materials. While not as prestigious or as ornamental as goods produced in High Hive, most warriors know that weapons and armor made in Crichton are sturdier and stronger; it is the custom of many to bear a suit of armor from High Hive to wear in public, and a suit made in Crichton for the actual battle.

Darkwood

N Large Town

Corruption +1; Crime +2; Economy +4; Law -2; Lore -1; Society +4
Qualities Guilds, Legendary Marketplace, Prosperous
Danger +5

Demographics

Government Council
Population 4,872 (66% human, 20% ferran, 9% rapacian, 5% other)

Notable NPCs

 (Excluding notable personages listed later)

Lord of the City Council Tysha Del (female human ranger 9)
Guildmaster of the Merchants Gibblenus (male goreaux mechamage 8)

Marketplace

Base Value 5,200; Purchase Limit 37,500; Spellcasting 5th
Minor Items 3d4; Medium Items 2d4; Major Items 1d4

Darkwood is notable as the largest free-standing settlement, which is to say the largest settlement outside of the hive cities, owing allegiance to the Queen Mother. Other than the hives, it is the home of the largest standing force of the Home Guard and even has a barracks that houses a single patrol of Swarmers, the only Swarmers permanently posted outside of High Hive and Crichton save those who remain on a standard patrol rotation throughout the Crawling Jungle at various watch stations built throughout.

In keeping with the oath sworn to the Queen Mother of Kyan, all significant transactions that take place within Darkwood are subjected to a tithe that requires a portion to be taxed and submitted to High Hive as part of the economic arrangement that continues to fund the nation's government. However, as a mercy to her people, the Queen Mother does not require tithes to be paid on barter, and thus many small settlements similar to Darkwood rely extensively on bartering. Darkwood is no different, and is home to the largest open-air marketplace in all of Kyan, where goods of virtually all types can be traded for other valuable commodities. Coin is welcome as well, as outsiders frequent the Darkwood market on a daily basis, but most tend to view it with annoyance, because it creates an additional level of bureaucracy. For this reason, there are those in Darkwood who do nothing but sell trade goods to outsiders for a significant mark-up so that the outsiders might trade more easily with the natives.

Beyond its vast marketplace and its Swarmer barracks, Darkwood's primary claim to fame is the robust industry of insect capture. While many important breeds of insects are domesticated and raised from eggs in the hive cities, it would take vastly more space and resources than even those enormous settlements have available to produce all that is required. A portion of Darkwood's most daring and adventurous citizens pride themselves on their ability to navigate the Crawling Jungle without significant danger. These men and women take to the wilderness and scour every hidden recess for eggs and larva of various types to bring to the traders in the Darkwood Market. Insect breeders from the hive cities frequent the market to acquire subjects for their stock, as do wranglers and entomancers. It is not altogether uncommon for the insect hunters to discover new sub-species of the great insects that roam the jungles, and these specimens can fetch a handsome price indeed.



THE INSECT RIDERS



History

The tradition of the insect riders is nearly as old as the nation of Kyan itself. When the first Queen Mother established her stronghold at the base of the Wall Mountains, she and her closest allies, men and women with whom she had been traveling and adventuring for nearly a decade, because the first to make use of the massive insects as mounts and beasts of war. Others in the village that would one day become High Hive trained for defense of the settlement as well, and became known as the Home Guard, a title that has endured more than one thousand years. When a member of the Home Guard demonstrated sufficient skill and inclination, the Queen Mother and her comrades would train him or her in the essentials of mounted combat, and in this way the ranks of the insect riders very gradually started to grow.

During the earliest years of Kyan's history, the Swarm's mounts varied in size significantly and were held in check primarily by the will of the first Queen Mother or her personally trained druids. The system was imperfect, and there were times that the Swarm ran amok during conflicts or even in times of peace. As the Golden Age began to settle in and there were fewer extant threats looming over the people, the querulous nature of the Swarm began to be of concern to some among the people, and difficult questions were asked. For a time, it seemed that the third Queen Mother of Kyan might have no choice but to disband her Swarm in order to keep order among her people.

The Swarm's salvation came in the form of a particularly ambitious and arrogant noble in neighboring Columbey. Eyeing the resources of the Crawling Jungle with envy, this noble began sending his men-at-arms on incursions into the jungle's edge, harvesting all manner of exotic plants and foodstuffs as much as possible. If it had not progressed further, the offense might have been overlooked, but sadly this only whetted the noble's appetite for more, and he began cutting down large quantities of lumber from around the jungle's outermost reaches. The Queen Mother at the time could have petitioned the throne of Columbey to halt the incursions, but she chose instead to demonstrate definitively the advantage the Swarm afforded her people. The next time the Columites intruded into the jungle the Swarm intercepted them and gave them the opportunity to flee. Indignant and feeling entitled to the spoils of his efforts, the noble ordered his men, who had superior numbers and weaponry, to attack.

The conflict was nothing short of a massacre. The Columites were unaccustomed to fighting cavalry, much less cavalry of such incredible agility. The Columites were wiped out except for their leader, the nobleman who initiated the conflict in the first place. He became a "guest" of the Queen Mother at the nascent settlement of High Hive until the king of Columbey made concessions that ensured any of his citizens responsible for stealing resources from the jungle answerable to the law in Kyan. Only then was the noble released and returned home, where he was subsequently stripped of all lands and titles and lived out the rest of his days as a meager merchant patron in one of the lesser neighborhoods in Tarello.

This incident cemented in the minds of the Kyanites their roles as the stewards and wardens of the Crawling Jungle, and created the perception of the Swarm as their most elite and vicious guardians. Even the most ardent detractors of the group would dare not raise a voice against them in the aftermath of this rousing victory, and the question of whether or not they should continue to exist was settled permanently. Quietly, the Queen Mother allocated many additional resources to those of her followers responsible for overseeing the mounts, ensuring that their behavior and actions would not threaten the Swarm as a whole again in the future, and establishing many of the training and entomancy practices that persist to the modern day in the process.



Role in Government

The use of insects as mounts is prevalent throughout every level of Kyan's society, including use by most levels of government. It is in the military, however, that the practice has its most profound presence, and the facet of the nation's government that is perhaps most different from other countries within the Known Lands. All members of the Kyanite military are trained in both infantry and cavalry tactics. The majority, however, are not permanently assigned to cavalry units, which are relatively rare. The infantry forces of the Kyan nation are known as the Home Guard, and it is from their ranks that the most skilled and elite cavalry forces are gathered to serve among the Swarmers.

Despite the perception to the contrary (and the subject matter of this work), the bulk of the Kyan military is made up of infantry forces. While it is true that all soldiers are trained in the care and use of insect steeds, the simple fact of the matter is that even the High Hives of Kyan cannot provide the number of steeds that would be required to give a mount to every soldier in service to the Queen Mother. Those who excel at the training are chosen to be full time cavalry, and any riders who fall in battle can have their mounts taken over by any member of the infantry, circumstances permitting.

After the legions of infantry, the largest division of the military is made up of the land-based cavalry legions. This is an extremely varied force, with at least a dozen different types of insect steeds employed in different units, although within a given unit the steeds are always the same in order to reduce inter-insect anxiety and prevent potential conflict. In the modern day, spiders are the most commonly used mount, owing in large part to the Queen Mother's personal affinity for the massive arachnids. Beetles and ants are also quite common, and to a lesser extent, various forms of the larger leaping insects such as grasshoppers and crickets.

Although not as large in number as the land-based cavalry, it is the air cavalry of Kyan that is perhaps most iconic of its power and danger. Giant hornets are the favored mount of the air cavalry, although other types of mount do exist in much smaller numbers. The speed and maneuverability of the hornet is the primary reason for its adoption, but the innate offensive capabilities of the creatures cannot be overlooked. Whereas a bee can sting but once, a hornet can sting over and over again with minimal ill effects, something that makes it invaluable in combat.



Specialized Units

Beyond the three basic elements of the Swarm, which are obviously designed to handle the various terrains of Kyan in the event of any type of conflict, there are smaller units that are much less known beyond the nation's borders. Indeed, few non-Kyanites are aware of their existence, and might find them even more amazing and worthy of awe than the basic hornet riders or spider riders that have been the subject of so many fanciful dramas over the years.

The Rain of Crichton

Trained exclusively in a single school in Crichton, the unit typically known only as the Rain consists of lone warriors mounted on giant fleas. Fleas are typically disdained somewhat by the Kyanites because of their parasitical nature, the particular species used by the Rain has been conditioned by the entomancers of the Academia Entomologia to subsist on other food sources, although the creatures much prefer blood. The Swarmers who ride atop them permit them to sup on blood only when they have defeated enemies in the field, which makes the creatures fierce and ready for combat at all times.

The flea mounts used by the Rain are not as massive as most other Swarm mounts, being only slightly larger than a horse. The entomancers are able to create them even smaller, and occasionally do so to serve as trained attack beasts, but any smaller and they cannot bear a rider without sacrificing significant speed and leaping ability.



The name of the unit comes from its battle tactics. Few are aware of the Rain's existence, much less the prodigious speed and agility that they possess. The Rain strikes when the enemy is unaware, leaping among their ranks and sowing chaos with death and destruction, then leaping away before any counterattack can be organized. More than once, this has created such discord among an enemy force that the front line was destabilized, and promptly shattered by the greater Swarm as a whole.

The Scalding Death

This rather colorfully named unit was established a century ago by a Swarm commander who was also a highly skilled entomancer himself. His deeds were great, and his memory venerated, and so the Queen Mother has not permitted the outlandish name of his unit to be changed despite that Arach is greatly annoyed by it. The Swarmers to serve the Scalding Death have a vastly different education than most of their kinsmen, as they are trained not only in the martial arts, but in the exact estimation of things like distance, trajectory, and even logistics. They ride atop massive bombardier beetles, creatures nearly twice the size of other mounts among the Swarm. Each beetle carries at least two men, and sometimes as many as five or six for the oldest and largest creatures.

As with smaller, normal bombardier beetles, the massive creatures that serve the Swarm create a chemical reaction within their thorax that produces a massive quantity of liquid that is, if not literally boiling, then very nearly so. The beetles are capable of projecting this liquid hundreds of yards in an arc that allows them to assault the front lines of an enemy force from a great distance. At closer range, they can easily strike at the formations beyond the front line, and even reach command sections if they are close enough to the front. This last tactic is rarely used, however, as the beetles the Scalding Death use are few in number and exceedingly precious, not to mention quite ponderous in their movement. For this reason, they are rarely deployed except against significantly dangerous enemies and only then when they can remain safely behind the lines of the Swarm and the Home Guard. Despite that they rarely gain great glory from personal combat, those stationed with the Scalding Death are nevertheless among the most elite members of

the Swarm and are lauded both by their comrades as well as the citizens of Crichton and even other settlements.


The Midnight Scouts

Smaller even than the Rain, the Midnight Scouts are a very small but elite unit serving as the night reconnaissance arm of the Swarm. They ride enormous fireflies which, while not particularly fast, are utterly silent as they fly, and of course have excellent night vision. Atop the fireflies, scouts are able to approach enemy fortifications without being detected and, when necessary, the flies can light their tails to illuminate the enemy so that information concerning their number, disposition, or anything else can be determined.

Obviously, this duty is quite dangerous, particularly given the aforementioned slow rate at which the fireflies travel. For this reason, they are among the only mounts in the entire Swarm that are barded, albeit only on the underside. Frequently when they have performed their duties, they come under enemy fire. The barding protects both the mount and the rider as they ascend as rapidly as possible to avoid further attack. Despite this, there is a greater mortality rate among the Midnight Scouts than in most units. The master entomancers and insect breeders have ensured that these fireflies grow to maturity in a very short period of time, so there is no shortage of mounts, but the unit has a reputation for glorious death nonetheless. Despite this grim fact, the Scouts have no shortage of applicants.

The Sons of the Hive

A very recently created unit, the Sons of the Hive are the talk of Kyan, and by far the greatest controversy to have stricken the nation in living memory. Open to both genders despite the unit's name, the Sons of the Hive as of yet number less than two dozen, but their ferocity and resilience in battle has been proven in a half dozen skirmishes with the Urbanan militia. The members of the Sons have been permanently altered in a horrifying way, inspired by the existence of golemoids, but utilizing insect parts instead of mechatmagical prosthetics. This renders



the Sons, individuals known as therionids, hideous and deformed, but very powerful. Most find them terrifying to look upon, but those who do not have to be around them on a regular basis laud their actions from afar, some going so far as to suggest that they are the perfect answer to the mechanized might of Urbana. The Queen Mother has permitted their creation and deployment, but as of yet has limited their number significantly and has declined to speak of them publicly.




Philosophies

It would be hard to identify a single, unifying philosophy of the many different members of the Swarm, who come from all races and genders, other than their universal, undying loyalty to the Queen Mother and the Kyan as a whole. This is of course not atypical for a national military force, but while other armies doubtless contain members who serve only for the purpose of regular pay to support their families, if there are such members serving in Kyan, then they are among the Home Guard rather than the Swarm proper.

As the most elite fighting force in Kyan, the members of the Swarm nevertheless have a strange lack of discipline when not in the field. Swarmers tend to be a very gregarious, boisterous lot, and have a reputation for hedonism when not on duty. While this reputation is deserved, it is not as universal as most think, and there are many Swarmers who pursue different paths, including entomancy and scholarship, among others. For those who do embrace a more hedonistic lifestyle, the people of Kyan look upon them as celebrities of sorts, and are more than willing to overlook or even enable such behavior.

Perhaps the most significant and prevalent philosophy among the Swarmers is the relationship each man or woman has with his mount. It is generally accepted, even among most Kyanites, that insects are nigh mindless creatures. While the entomancers in service to the Queen Mother have successfully bred greater intelligence among the mounts used by the Swarm, they are nevertheless still unintelligent creatures, equal perhaps to a horse or some other untrained beast. The result is that a Swarm mount responds poorly to virtually everyone, save for its trainers, and even more so, its rider. The bond between a Swarmer and his mount is something almost supernatural, and while another man could attempt to give orders to the beast, they are unlikely to be understood even on the most primal, basic level.

It is not uncommon for a cavalry warrior to look upon his mount as more than a mere animal, and the Swarmers are no different. Each man gives his mount a name, typically based upon its behavior, achievements, or perhaps what he perceives as its personality. It is said that the personality of a Swarmer and his mount come to be very similar, and perception seems to support this idea. The entomancers insist that this is merely a result of training a mount to respond to its rider's desires, but the Swarmers themselves are more likely to subscribe to the former theory rather than listen to the evidence and reason espoused by the latter.



Life among the Swarm

Despite the many oddities of their circumstances, life among the ranks of the Swarm is not all that different from life in other military organizations. The members barrack together most of the time, but when on duty in their home city they are frequently permitted to stay in their own residences if they prefer. Barracks are separated by gender but this is an issue of privacy only, as the leaders of the Swarm recognize that at the elite level the insect riders have achieved, there is little to no chance that personal affectations will influence the execution of their duties; fraternization among the ranks is permitted as long as it is between individuals of equivalent rank.

As might be expected for such an elite organization, the insect riders spend a great deal of time on maneuvers. However, their motivation is

for quite a different reason. Experience has shown that the giant insect mounts that the Swarmers make use of do not respond well to long periods of inactivity. For whatever reason, keeping them active drastically increases their lifespan as well as their combat ability, and as such it is rare for any member of the Swarm to go more than two or three days at the absolute most without an aggressive sortie into the Crawling Jungle. This is part of the reason that the jungle, while still extremely dangerous, has a significantly lower population of nocturnals than most other regions. Most nocturnals spring into being due to the fears of intelligent living beings, and since the Crawling Jungle is sparsely populated, there are fewer nocturnals spawned there. Those who migrate in, on the other hand, are frequently the subject of grand hunts by entire squadrons of the Swarm, ensuring that the villages that have sworn their oaths to the Queen Mother are provided with the protection that they have purchased with their loyalty.

The Swarm has always been open to membership from both men and women. Prior to the Darkfall, this was uncommon throughout the Known Lands; while many orders permitted women to join, they did so only in very small numbers, whereas the Swarm has always had a significant number of women members, varying between a third and half of their ranks depending upon the time in history. This is perhaps part of the reason that advancement within the ranks of the Swarm has always been so staunchly meritocratic rather than political; while there are individuals who are able to gain rank due to the influence of their family, they are thankfully few and far between. This has doubtless contributed to the reputation of the Swarm as a more effective fighting force than that fielded by many of their neighbors.

PERSONS OF NOTE



Queen Selanna, Queen Mother of Kyan

[Female human fighter 8 / cavalier 8]

There are few monarchs in the Known Lands who are not capable combatants, but there are fewer still who could hold their own against the fierce warrior queen Selanna. King Corben of Arasteen, himself a trained paladin of the Radiant Order, has admitted without shame that he believes Selanna could best him nine times out of ten in a contest of arms, and while few others have the humility to admit it, many privately share a similar suspicion. Selanna was the third-born child of the previous queen, and not the eldest daughter, so she never believed that she would sit upon the throne. Instead, as has been the tradition in her family for generations, she instead joined the Home Guard and quickly found a place among the Swarmers. Six years before the Darkfall, when Selanna was half-way through her third decade of life, her elder sister, the Queen, perished giving birth to her first-born, an infant that followed her mother into death. Selanna found herself queen, and while she did not desire the position, neither would she shirk from it.

Selanna's leadership of Kyan draws heavily from her military training. Already a high ranking officer at the time of her coronation despite her relatively young age, Selanna has structured her royal bureaucracy less like a queen's court and more like a military hierarchy. While this practice drew significant suspicion and criticism in the first few years of her reign, after the Darkfall, the people of Kyan have subscribed to her philosophy without reservation. The many victories Selanna has claimed against the nocturnals have not only affirmed her wisdom, but earned her the adoration of her people as well. In a land without significant worship, the reverence of the citizenry for Selanna is all but a religion.

Arach, Commander of the Crichton Swarm

[Male half-elf fighter 14]

If Queen Selanna is virtually the subject of worship by her people, then surely the warrior Arach of Crichton is her high priest, or perhaps a lesser god of the same pantheon. Arach is the single highest ranking member of the Swarmers in the hive city of Crichton, the largest settlement in Kyan other than High Hive itself. It is said that there is no other warrior whom Selanna trusts so completely, nor is there any other who can hope to match her ferocity on the field of battle. It is also said that Arach is the only warrior who has ever been able to unseat Selanna from one of her beloved steeds during the Swarmer drills, which are conducted away from the prying eyes of the non-military citizens of Kyan. This is alleged to have happened only once out of dozens of matches, of course, but it is a great accolade nevertheless.

In a different era, Arach would likely be less a hero and perhaps more of a villain. He is desperate for battle, and the conflict between the nations of Kyan and Urbana has given him an opportunity to express his bloodlust, wherein in a previous age it might only have led him to a terrible end. As much as Arach hates Lord Urbane and his predatory military practices, he is privately grateful for their existence, because it gives him purpose and the freedom to do that which he loves: wage war. His defense of Kyan against incursions by the Shadow Army have made him a hero, and his brutal forays over the border into the Urbanan manite mines near Contrino have made him a legend.

In truth, Arach's ferocity in battle and his apparently boundless hatred for Kyan's foes mask another, more personal frustration. Prior to her ascension to the throne, Arach and Selanna intended to marry. Since her coronation, however, Selanna has been content for them to remain merely lovers, and if the rumors are to be believed, Arach is not her only paramour. Though he has privately entreated her, Selanna has no apparent desire to share her throne with another, and has expressed disinterest in the marriage she once coveted. Arach has no particular designs on power, as he already has command of the Swarm, and he has never desired anything else. His affection for Selanna is genuine, and he desperately wants the simple assurance that she feels the same for him. Unfortunately, he continually hears rumors that Selanna has other lovers, and in recent months he has heard perhaps the most troubling rumor of all: that Selanna is concealing a pregnancy.

Nelesh, Founder of the Academia Entomologia

[Male human entomancer 12]

The Queen Mother's younger brother is the only surviving sibling she has, and although she grants him largely whatever he desires, Nelesh has little illusion that she bears him any great fondness; even as a child, he was a peculiar sort, and Selanna and he have never had a great deal in common. Nevertheless, she treats him as family and pays respect to both his gifts as an arcanist and his advice as one of her closest counsels. For this, she has his loyalty, even if perhaps he must sometimes keep from her information about experiments she would not approve. It is for her nation and her people that he does this, and he knows deep in his heart that one day she will understand.

In recent years, Nelesh has become more subdued and less outspoken, a change that the Queen Mother has noticed but has not been able to understand. She does have more pressing matters to deal with, after all, but Nelesh's changed behavior is of concern to her. She suspects it may be frustration on his part, but she could not be more wrong; what has prompted Nelesh's radical change in demeanor is guilt. Although he

cannot be certain, privately Nelesh fears that he is ultimately responsible for the fact that the ilithix hives have become corrupted by the Darkfall. Some years ago, despite his sister's command to the contrary, Nelesh secretly continued his experiments to increase the intelligence of insects in order to make them more effective servants and weapons against all of Kyan's present and future enemies. Unfortunately, many of his experimental subjects were lost when ilithix gatherers ranged into the region where his work was being done, and they were taken back to be absorbed by the Brood Mother. Nelesh suspects, and has found nothing to disprove his notions, that the absorption of this intelligent insects gave the Brood Mother enhanced self-awareness, which permitted it to make a pact with the Darkfall and led to perhaps the greatest threat to Kyan in history. Countless lives and many settlements have been lost to the ilithix since that day, and Nelesh knows that nothing he will ever do, no matter how significant or heroic, will be able to make up for such a terrible crime.

Perhaps because of his shame and guilt, Nelesh has recently taken a much more active role with the Swarmers, something that both delights his sister as well as striking her as extremely strange. In particular, he is interested in any action taken against the ilithix hives in the Wall Mountains, causing many to suspect him of wanting to capture specimens for experimentation. He does nothing to dispel these suspicions, as he believes they are less damning than the truth. Nelesh is no great warrior, and even the offensive capabilities of his magic are somewhat questionable, but his bond with the mount he has chosen, a smaller hornet he calls Bitter, is as close as any forged by the senior officers of the Swarm who have been riding for decades. This bond, and his sensitivity to the mounts of others, has made him an invaluable resource when it comes to reconnaissance and scouting enemy positions.

Dupal Natel, Architect of the Therionids

[Female dwarf wizard 9 / steamwright 2]

Dupal Natel, a woman who professes to hold a doctorate of an undisclosed nature from the Celestial College in Aramyst, is a figure who has recently risen to great prominence within Kyanite society. She is the last surviving member of a very old and formerly prominent family that can trace their lineage back to the days of the first Queen Mother. She proudly uses her surname whenever identifying herself, something that is not currently common in most societies in the Known Lands. Despite all this, it is not her pedigree, her education, or her eccentricities that have made her such a prominent figure. Rather, it is how she has ingratiated herself into the ranks of the Swarm, and more to the point, how she has developed new magical practices that have become something of a controversy throughout the nation: Dupal Natel created the therionids.

Natel commands significant arcane skill as well as a robust and diverse education in a number of scholarly topics. Unlike most non-mechamage arcanists, Natel also has an in-depth understanding of technology and at some point in the past she has gained extensive, first-hand knowledge of golemoids and the implants that they use. Her background in entomancy led Natel to the idea that it would be possible to accomplish a similar result using the natural gifts of Kyan instead of mechemagical prosthetics. Her work began only a year ago, and targeted primarily amputees who had refused the opportunity to make use of golemoid implants, something more common in Kyan than in most other nations. Once her methods had been perfected in this manner, Natel discreetly approached a number of warriors she had become acquainted with and that she knew were familiar with her work, and offered them enhancements to increase their prowess in battle. Some suspect that Natel's interest in therionids is only part of some more ambitious project.

Enemies of the Swarm

Any entity or organization that would dare to threaten the well being of any citizen of Kyan is the sworn enemy of Queen Selanna's Swarm and all those who swear their oaths of loyalty to her banner.

Lord Urbane, the Iron Tyrant

Kyan always enjoyed neutral relations with their neighbors to the north, Columbey, throughout the Golden Age. Without need of trade between the two nations due to Kyan's self-sufficiency, there has been little to foster long-term relationships between the two peoples. The death of Columbey and the birth of Urbana has changed that dynamic significantly, however, and now that Urbane and his military machine have stripped the resources of their homeland, the Iron Tyrant's eyes have turned to the lush, rich lands of their southern neighbors. Border skirmishes between the two have become increasingly common, and most believe that open conflict is inevitable. The Swarm, for their part, look forward to this with gusto, convinced that their form of warfare will defeat the mechanical monstrosities unleashed by Urbane and his Shadow Army.

The Brood Mother of the Ilithix

Without question, the most significant and present threat to the nation of Kyan and its people is the ancient and sinister Brood Mother of the ilithix race. Immeasurably old and powerful beyond all mortal reckoning, the Brood Mother holds absolute dominion over virtually every ilithix in existence, with only a handful ever having escaped her mental dominance to bear the curse of individuality.

The Brood Mother's location is unknown, else Queen Selanna would doubtless expend whatever resources were necessary to see it destroyed utterly. Presumably it is sequestered somewhere deep beneath the mountains, but any excursion to locate it has met with disaster. The hives that have been located thus far are homes to individual queens, the valued daughters of the Brood Mother and the only other ilithix that have even a semblance of individuality. Through the queens, the Mother rules all living ilithix save a handful of exiles, whom all her children seek to destroy at all costs. A single queen is a significant threat in and of itself, and can cause the destruction of entire settlements.

The False Jagtera

Off of the southern coast of Kyan are a number of small islands, the largest of which is called Phoros (which is also the name of the archipelago). For most of Kyan's history, Phoros was a self-governing principality that paid taxes to the throne but were left to do as they saw fit, extending even as far as the ruler being permitted to call themselves the king or queen, surely something that would not be permitted in any other nation in the Known Lands. Phoros survived the worst of the Darkfall without serious loss, but a few years afterwards, the large insects called jagtera began to die off inexplicably. The jagtera were mounts, beasts of burden, and a prime food source for the people of Phoros, and their potential loss threatened their entire way of life. The details of what followed were unclear, but the loss of the jagtera apparently was the beginning of a plague that soon spread to the people of the island as well. Unfortunately, the Kyanites were forced to quarantine the entire island, turning away anyone who attempted to flee for fear that the plague might spread to the mainland. Years later, as far as the Kyanites know, there is no one left alive on the island. But occasionally, jagtera survive the sea and come ashore, where they are quickly killed and burned to prevent any potential contamination.

The Crawling Jungle

Although the people of Kyan are amazingly well adapted to an incredibly strange and dangerous environment, the Crawling Jungle is still extremely lethal and can kill even the most seasoned native if they let their guard down even for a moment. The array of naturally occurring threats and dangers present in the jungle is without limit, but here are a handful of the more colorful ones:

✧ **Bullet Bugs** – These tiny, dense insects can fly at incredible speeds and are attracted to heat sources. During the bi-annual mating season, the females will lay their eggs within any source of heat they can find, which frequently includes any warm-blooded animals they come across. Upon detecting a heat source, they will fly toward it at



full speed, impaling it and releasing their eggs as they die. The effects of this are much like a bullet wound, hence the creatures' name. The regions where bullet bugs are located are carefully avoided during mating season.

✧ **Juice Bugs** – Less of a danger and more of a personal hazard, juice bugs are cat-sized insects that crawl to the very top of the Crawling Jungle's canopy and glut themselves on the fruits found there, which are out of reach for most of their competing species. Once full, these bugs can often become too heavy and fall to the ground, where they can be picked up by enterprising locals to feast on the juice that they store in their abdominal cavities. The hazard is that this process often leads to varying degrees of fermentation of the juice in question, and while many juice bugs can be a delightful source of alcoholic enjoyment, many are also dangerous and can cause blindness or even death in those who drink it.

✧ **Foulblossom** – This rank-smelling relative of the orchid has developed a potent defense against herbivorous insects in the form of an incredibly potent insecticidal secretion. Insects have long since learned to avoid it, but many of the Swarmer mounts that have been bred and raised in captivity do not have the same instincts as their wilderness-borne kin and can, if left unattended, poison themselves very quickly by eating the leaves of the foulblossom. More troubling, the enemies of Kyan are aware of this plant's existence and pay a premium for samples of its sap so that they may use it against the Swarm on the field of battle.

NEW MECHANICS

New Archetype: Therionid (Fighter)

✧ **Weapon & Armor Proficiency:** A therionid is proficient with all simple weapons and with any three martial weapons of his choice, either melee or ranged. A therionid loses all armor proficiencies as well as proficiency with a tower shield.

✧ **Carapace Graft:** At 1st level, a therionid has been implanted with carapace that protects him from harm. This carapace covers his torso and, to a lesser extent, his limbs. Although it provides natural protection, it also prevents the therionid from wearing conventional armor. The carapace provides a +5 natural armor. These bonuses increase by +1 at the 3rd level and every four levels thereafter (7th, 11th, 15th, and 19th levels). Beginning at the 7th level, this carapace has thickened sufficiently that it can be treated as masterwork armor, and thus is eligible to be enchanted.

This ability replaces all Armor Training and Armor Mastery abilities.

✧ **Weapon Graft:** At 1st level, a therionid has a powerful insect weapon grafted in place of one of his hands (typically his dominant hand but either may be chosen). This weapon may take the form of a claw, a pincer, or a raptorial leg similar to a mantis. These weapons inflict 1d8 damage and the therionid has a bonus of +1 to all attack and damage rolls made using them. This bonus increases by an additional +1 at 5th level and every four levels thereafter (9th, 13th, 17th, and 20th levels). Beginning at 5th level, the grafted weapon counts as masterwork and is eligible to be enchanted. At each additional bonus level, the weapon ignores one point of natural armor and one point of DR, increasing at each subsequent increment level.

This ability replaces all Weapon Training and Weapon Mastery abilities.

✧ **Insect Resonance:** At 1st level, the therionid may select one insect mastery from the entomancer class feature. The therionid gains one eligible ability from that list of mastery abilities. At 6th level and every

four levels thereafter (10th, 14th, and 18th levels), the therionid may select an additional ability from that same mastery list.

This ability replaces the bonus feat that fighters normally receive at each of the levels where an ability is chosen.

New Creatures

✧ Kyanite Swarmer Bombardier Beetle * CR 5

XP 1,600

N Huge vermin

Init +0; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

Defense

AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+10 natural)

hp 31 (3d8+18)

Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2

Immune mind-affecting effects

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +12 (3d6+6)

Special Attacks breath weapon (10 ft. cone, 4d6 acid damage, Reflex DC 13 half, usable once every 1d4 rounds)

Statistics

Str 31, Dex 6, Con 22, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 9

Base Atk +10, CMB +22, CMD 30

Ecology

Environment temperate forests

Organization solitary, pair, or cluster (3-6)

Treasure none

The specialized breed of bombardier beetles that are utilized in the Swarm are the largest of all weaponized insects in Kyan. They have multiple riders to ensure that the great beasts can be positioned correctly. Their sheer size tends to make other insects, even the Swarmer mounts, skittish.

✧ Kyanite Swarmer Firefly * CR 1

XP 400

N Large vermin

Init +3; Senses darkvision 60ft.; Perception +2

Defense

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+1 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 19 (2d8+10)

Fort +8, Ref +2, Will -2

Immune mind-affecting effects

Offense

Speed 20 ft.; fly 60ft. (good)

Melee bite +6 (1d6+5)

Statistics

Str 20, Dex 15, Con 20, Int -, Wis 7, Cha 2

Base Atk +5, CMB +11, CMD 23

Skills Climb +13, Fly +6, Perception +2; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

SQ bio-luminescence

Ecology

Environment any temperate or tropical

Organization solitary, pair, or swarm (3-12)

Treasure none

Special Abilities

Bio-luminescence (Ex) – Swarmer fireflies are able to initiate a chemical reaction that lights up their thorax and shines brilliantly but in a carefully directed beam. This effectively illuminates an area in a sixty foot cone as well as a torch, allowing for detail to be seen at longer ranges.

Much more fleet of wing than their proportionately smaller counterparts, Swarmer fireflies also have a much brighter and more directed bio-luminescence, allowing them to shine like a spotlight-like brilliance upon those targets they wish to observe. During daylight hours, they are much more sluggish and typically of very little use.

✧ Kyanite Swarmer Flea * CR ½

XP 200

N large vermin

Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0

Defense

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11 (+2 Dex, +1 size)

hp 5 (1d8+1)

Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0

Immune mind-affecting effects

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +2 (1d4+1 plus disease)

Special Attacks disease

Statistics

Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int -, Wis 11, Cha 6

Base Atk +0, CMB +2, CMD 14

Skills Acrobatics +0 (+20 when jumping); Racial Modifiers +20 Acrobatics when jumping

SQ uncanny leap

Ecology

Environment any land or underground

Organization solitary, cluster (2-6), or colony (7-12)

Treasure none

Special Abilities

Disease (Ex) – Bite – injury; save Fort DC11; onset 1d3 days; frequency 1 day; effect 1 Con damage; cure 1 save. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Uncanny Leap (Ex) – As a full round action, a swarmer flea can jump up to 120 feet. A flea can treat this jump as a charge, as long as the leap is made in a straight line. This may be done while the flea is carrying a rider.

Easily the smallest of the Swarm mounts, the giant fleas used by the Rain of Crichton are roughly the size of horses, albeit differently shaped. Riders do not actually ride them so much as strap themselves to their back like a satchel, and then hold on for dear life. Swarmer fleas have had their parasitical nature altered via entomancy, ensuring that they are easier to control and do not prey upon anything other than their intended targets.

✧ Kyanite Swarmer Hornet * CR 5

XP 1,600

N Large vermin

Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9

Defense

AC 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 45 (7d8+14)

Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3

Immune mind-affecting effects

Offense

Speed 20 ft.; fly 60 ft. (good)

Melee bite +9 (1d3+5), sting +9 (1d4+5 plus poison)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks poison

Statistics

Str 20, Dex 12, Con 15, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 11

Base Atk +5, CMB +11, CMD 22

Skills Perception +9, Survival +1 (+4 orient direction); Racial Modifiers +8 Perception, +4 Survival to orient direction
SQ pheromone

Ecology

Environment temperate and warm land

Organization solitary, cluster (2-5), or nest (11-20)

Treasure standard or otherwise

Special Abilities

Poison (Ex) – Sting – injury; save DC 21; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d3 Dexterity damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.

Pheromone (Ex) – The first time a giant hornet is successfully it in combat, it releases a fear pheromone that heightens the aggressiveness of all giant hornets within 50 ft.

All affected giant hornets receive a +1 morale bonus on attack rolls for the remainder of the encounter and fight without penalty even while disabled or dying.

One of the most commonly pictured Swarmer mounts, the giant hornets that serve as the aerial cavalry of Kyan are incredibly fast and maneuverable in the air, and the Urbanan army has learned much to their chagrin that they are extremely difficult to target with firearms and even steamwright weaponry. Swarmer hornets have had their stingers altered via generations of entomancy, ensuring quick, powerful strikes that can be made in rapid succession.

✧ Kyanite Swarmer Spider * CR 5

XP 1,600

N Huge vermin

Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; tremorsense 60 ft.; Perception +5

Defense

AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 16 (+2 Dex, +8 natural, -2 size)

hp 52 (7d8+21)

Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +3

Immune mind-affecting effects

Offense

Speed 40 ft.; climb 40 ft.

Melee bite +8 (2d8+7 plus poison)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

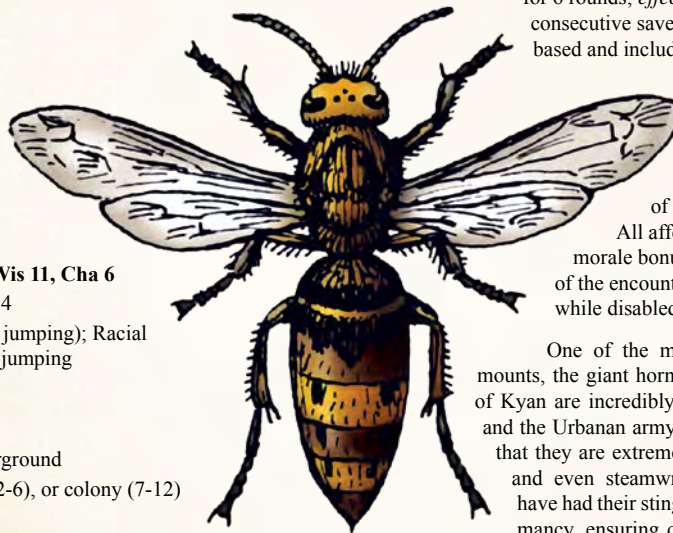
Special Attacks web (+5 ranged, DC 16, hp 7)

Statistics

Str 21, Dex 15, Con 16, Int -, Wis 12, Cha 2

Base Atk +5, CMB +12, CMD 24 (36 vs. trip)

Skills Climb +29, Perception +5, Stealth -2; Racial Modifiers +16 Climb, +4 Perception, +4 Stealth
SQ compression



Ecology

Environment temperate or cold hills or underground

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure incidental

Special Abilities

Poison (Ex) – Bite – injury; *save* Fort DC 18 (includes +2 racial bonus); *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Str and Dex; *cure* 1 save

Like the hornets, the Swarmer spiders are massive creatures that those outside of Kyan's borders know of and imagine when stories of Kyan are told. They are deceptively fast and can cover virtually any type of terrain, up to and including vertical surfaces that they can ascend with the same speed that they move across open plains.

* Kyanite Swarmer Water Strider * CR 1

XP 400

N Large vermin

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +4

Defense

AC 12, **touch** 10, **flat-footed** 11 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, -1 size)

hp 19 (3d8+6)

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Immune mind-affecting effects

Offense

Speed 30 ft., **fly** 20 ft. (poor)

Melee 2 claws +2 (1d4+1), bite +2 (1d2+1)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Statistics

Str 13, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** -, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 2

Base Atk +2, **CMB** +4, **CMD** 16 (24 vs. trip)

Skills Fly -5, **Perception** +4, **Swim** +5; **Racial Modifiers** +4

Perception, +4 **Swim**

SQ water skating

Ecology

Environment any water

Organization solitary or colony (2-9)

Treasure incidental

Special Abilities

Tremorsense (Ex) – A water strider's tremorsense functions only when the creature is in contact with the water's surface.

Water Skating (Ex) – A water strider can move on the surface of the water as if it were on land. A water strider swimming at the water's surface can pull itself onto the water with a successful Swim check.

The least numerous of the principal three branches of the Swarm, the Swarmer water striders are nevertheless an important component that has served with great distinction against the Urbanan iron-clad annihilators on both the southern coast as well as the rivers of Kyan.

Swarmer water striders have been bred to more effectively distribute the weight of any burden they carry. For that reason, they may carry up to 500 lbs. and still make use of their water skating ability, rather than the 200 lbs. unmodified water striders are limited to.



Insect Mounts

Many of the creatures that the Swarm uses in combat are specially bred and extremely difficult for non-military citizens to acquire. However, the more conventional, less conditioned versions of the same insects are often bred for the purpose of serving as mounts for the general populace, but the price to acquire one can be somewhat daunting.

Insect Mount

Mount Type	Price
Giant Beetle (crawling only, no flight)	300 crests
Giant Hornet (no stinger)	2,000 crests
Giant Spider (non-venomous, no spinnerets)	1,200 crests



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