

# Exotic Encounters:

## Ankhegs



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## Introduction

The *Pathfinder Bestiary*, and the long line of monstrous encyclopedia that came before it, do a great job of attacking the problem of providing game statistics and mechanical information for a very wide variety of creatures. There are a lot of strange creatures from fantasy novels and movies, from ancient mythology, and, as time went on, from the twisted minds of game designers and even GMs, for that matter. Anyone today who tried to go about creating an extensive bestiary of all the different cool and interesting fantasy monsters could fill three or four volumes with three hundred monsters each, and still have a long way left to go, with fans crying out for various “forgotten” monsters to get some attention. That kind of breadth doesn’t leave a whole lot of room for depth, and that’s where *Exotic Encounters* comes in.

There are all kinds of reasons why you might not want to use a monster stat-block straight from the core rules. For one thing, if your players have a habit of browsing through such books, or are long-time veterans who know the basic ins and outs of most fantasy staples, you may need an unusual stat-block just to throw them a curve ball and teach them that they can’t count on their out of character knowledge to take all the mystery out of the game. Alternatively, many GMs can recall a time when they wanted to make use of a certain monster in their game, only to find that it was a few CRs too high or low for what they had in mind.

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This particular installment of *Exotic Encounters* focuses on the terrifying and ant-like ankhegs, creatures which have a long gaming pedigree, created for *Dragon* magazine and predating even *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*. This book explores three new types of ankhegs, including the **spitting ankheg**, a smaller variant that relies on its acidic spit to take down foes, the **sand devil ankheg**, an ambush predator that is capable of bursting from beneath the ground, grabbing a target, and dragging him back beneath the ground in a single motion, and the **toxic ankheg**, a variation that releases its acid as a toxic cloud, which not only burns its prey, but also sickens them and envelops them in a vision-obscuring green haze of acidic gas.



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## Spitting Ankheg

The creature before you is an insectlike creature the size of a large dog or a child. Its carapace is a glossy, reflective black, and its large compound eyes glitter menacingly in the light. From its mandibles drip a constant stream of dribbling green acid, which dribbles to the ground with a hiss. The creature cocks its head and chitters at you unintelligibly.

### ANKHEG, SPITTING

CR 2

XP 600

N Small magical beast

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +5 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 13 (2d10+2)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +1

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

**Melee** bite +3 (1d6 plus 1d6 acid)

**Ranged** acid glob +6 touch (1d6 acid)

**Special Attacks** adhesive spit

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 1, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 4

**Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 11 (19 vs. trip)

**Feats** Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Climb +4, Perception +8

**SQ** potent acid

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** temperate or warm hills, plains, or swamps

**Organization** solitary or pair

**Treasure** incidental

**Acid Glob (Ex):** A spitting ankheg is capable of spitting globs of deadly acid. The spitting ankheg can make a ranged touch attack with a range increment of 15 feet. If the attack hits, it deals 1d6 points of acid damage to the target.

**Adhesive Spit (Ex):** In addition to its normal acid, a spitting ankheg can also spit a special acid that is more adhesive, clinging to the target, slowing him down and continuing to damage him. Any time that the spitting ankheg

uses its acid spit ranged attack, it can choose to use this ability. It must declare that it is using this ability before the attack roll is made. If the attack hits, the target must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 12) or suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls and move at half speed, as the clinging acidic substance makes it difficult for him to move. These penalties last for one minute, or until the target takes a full-round action to scrape the adhesive spit from his body, whichever comes first. Additionally, as long as the adhesive spit remains on the target, each round, at the beginning of the target's turn, it suffers an additional 1d6 points of acid damage. Once a spitting ankheg uses this ability, it must wait 2d4 rounds before it can use it again.

**Potent Acid (Ex):** A spitting ankheg's acid is particularly effective at breaking down and destroying inanimate objects. Acid damage dealt by the spitting ankheg's acid spit is not halved before applying hardness. Additionally, whenever the spitting ankheg confirms a critical hit on a creature with its acid spit attack, one of that creature's held or worn items is damaged by the attack, as well, as though the target had rolled a natural 1 on a saving throw to resist an effect. See the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook* for more information on damaging objects.

## Ecology

Though spitting ankhegs are much smaller than their more common cousins, they are nearly as dangerous, for they produce much larger quantities of their acidic saliva, and are capable of propelling their deadly payload at much greater distances. Because spitting ankhegs are not limited in the frequency with which they can use their acid spit, they have developed to take down their foes from a range, burrowing beneath the earth, popping up a safe range from their prey, and harassing them with ranged volleys of acid, then popping back into the ground and moving again when their target tries to flee (or, in the case of adventurers and larger predators, when it tries to close to melee). Spitting ankhegs are even more aggressive than their larger cousins, and will tenaciously pursue any threat for miles, harassing it from a range until it is worn out and brought low.

## Sand Devil Ankheg

*In a sudden shower of dirt, a horrible monstrosity erupts from the ground below you. There is a horrible screeching sound, and a rapid slashing sound as huge, powerful mandibles attempt to slice you in two. The horrible creature behind the attack is some sort of giant, ant-like creature, its carapace a dull brown, its huge, alien compound eyes an angry, glowing red.*

### ANKHEG, SAND DEVIL CR 5

XP 1,600

N Large magical beast

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +6

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 9, flat-footed 18 (+9 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 51 (6d10+18)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 40 ft.

**Melee** bite +8 (2d6+6 plus 1d4 acid and grab)

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

**Special Attacks** spit acid

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 19, **Dex** 10, **Con** 17, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 6

**Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +9 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 19 (27 vs. trip)

**Feats** Improved Grapple, Skill Focus (Climb), Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Climb +13, Perception +9

#### ECOLOGY

**Environment** temperate or warm deserts, hills, mountains, or plains

**Organization** solitary, pair, nest (3-6), or colony (8-14)

**Treasure** incidental

**Spit Acid (Ex):** Once every 6 hours, a sand devil ankheg can spit a 30-foot line of acid. Creatures struck by this acid take 4d4 points of acid damage (Reflex DC 16 halves). Once a sand devil ankheg uses this attack, it must wait 6 hours before using it again. Additionally, during this time period, its bite attack does not inflict any additional acid damage. As a result, a sand devil ankheg does not use this ability unless it is desperate or frustrated, most often spitting acid

when reduced to fewer than half its full normal hit points or when it cannot not successfully grab an opponent. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Tunneling Ambush (Ex):** A sand devil ankheg is capable of erupting from beneath the earth, grabbing a creature in its mandibles, and sinking back down into the ground in but a moment. As a full-round action, a sand devil ankheg that is directly beneath a creature on the surface can burst from the ground and make a single bite attack against the creature above it. If the attack hits, and the sand devil ankheg successfully grabs the target, it may immediately make a combat maneuver check as part of the grapple to move the grapple, carrying its prey back beneath the surface. If this check is successful, or if the sand devil ankheg fails to grab the target in the first place (but not if it grabs the target and fails the grapple check to move it), then the sand devil ankheg may burrow away, moving up to half its burrow speed if it is grappling, or up to its full burrow speed if it isn't. Though the sand devil technically enters and leaves the target's square as part of this attack, that part of the movement does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

## Ecology

While all ankhegs are known for their skill at burrowing, and are universally reviled by farmers for their tendency to destroy farmland and ruin crops, sand devil ankhegs are the most terrifying type of ankheg to be lurking beneath one's feet. Ambush predators by nature, these ankhegs are specialized to burst up from beneath the soil with surprising speed, grab their prey in their pincers, and retreat beneath the soil before anyone can make a move to stop them.

Sand devil ankhegs are somewhat more cunning than their more common cousins, and have been known to keep "larders," or sealed-off underground chambers where they deposit their prey to save for later. It is not uncommon for them to deposit such prey in these chambers alive, then wait a day or two to eat them, allowing them to run out of oxygen and die a slow death by suffocation, saving the ankheg the trouble of killing them itself.

## Toxic Ankheg

*The creature before you resembles a giant ant, the size of a horse. Its carapace is a slick and oily black-green shade, which seems to shimmer, as though coated in some kind of oil or grease. A greenish foam bubbles between its mandibles, and hisses and steams as it drips slowly onto the ground below.*

### **ANKHEG, TOXIC**

**CR 7**

**XP 3,200**

**N** Large magical beast

**Init** +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, tremorsense 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

#### **DEFENSE**

**AC** 19, touch 9, flat-footed 19 (+10 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 60 (7d10+42)

**Fort** +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

**Immune** acid, poison

**Defensive Abilities** acidic blood

#### **OFFENSE**

**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.

**Melee** bite +11 (2d8+6 plus 1d8 acid and grab)

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

**Special Attacks** noxious breath

#### **STATISTICS**

**Str** 19, **Dex** 10, **Con** 22, **Int** 1, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 5

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 21 (29 vs. trip)

**Feats** Improved Natural Attack (bite), Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Climb +10, Perception +8

#### **ECOLOGY**

**Environment** temperate or warm jungles, marsh, or plains

**Organization** solitary, pair, or brood (1-2 plus 1d4 young toxic ankhegs)

**Treasure** incidental

**Acidic Blood (Ex):** Whenever a creature deals 5 or more points of slashing or piercing damage to a toxic ankheg in a single attack, the toxic ankheg's acidic blood gushes from the wound, dealing 1d4 points of acid damage to that creature.

**Noxious Breath (Ex):** As a standard action, a toxic ankheg can breathe out a cloud of acidic, toxic vapor from its mouth. The noxious vapors

quickly expand to fill a 30-ft.-radius area centered on the ankheg. Each creature that enters or begins its turn in the area of the noxious vapors takes 2d6 points of acid damage, and is nauseated for one round. A successful Fortitude save (DC 19) halves the damage and leaves the creature sickened, instead of nauseated. The vapors also provide concealment within the area, as the spell *fog cloud*. The cloud of noxious breath remains for 2d4 rounds, or until it is dispersed (a moderate wind [11+ mph] disperses the cloud in 4 rounds; a strong wind [21+ mph]) disperses the cloud in 1 round). A toxic ankheg must wait 1 minute after using this ability before it can be used again. Toxic ankhegs are immune to the nauseating effect of the vapors, but not the concealment that the vapors provide. The saving throw DC is Constitution-based.

## Ecology

Perhaps the most fearsome variety of ankheg, the toxic ankhegs are so named for their particularly potent acidic breath. Whereas other species of ankheg spit or spray their acidic secretions, the toxic ankheg is instead adapted to breathe out huge clouds of acidic gases, which, not only burn their prey, but also sicken them, taking the fight out of their victims. A toxic ankheg's noxious breath has been known to not only kill a live deer but dissolve its skin in a matter of minutes. Normally, the ankheg would then devour the quickly-liquifying remains, but even without further interference, the flesh would dissolve completely in a matter of minutes. For this reason, some assassins and trapmakers prize toxic ankheg breath, and demand for the product has created a growing industry in toxic ankheg farming, a profession that is fraught with peril beyond even what most adventurers face.

Unlike most ankhegs, toxic ankhegs mate for life, and raise their young to the point of maturity. Toxic ankheg nests can usually be identified from a notable distance, as they mark the edges of their territory with their noxious acid, and in some cases the area as much as a mile around a toxic ankheg nest stinks with an acrid, bile-like scent, which grows stronger as the nest is approached.

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