Exotic Encounters:

Dryads



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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.

Exotic Encounters takes a single, iconic monster, and creates three new variants on that theme. These variants aren't simple tweaks, and are more than simply advancing or removing Hit Dice, though that occurs as well. Each of these three variations on the monster's theme has a specific, flavorful goal in mind, and a role to play, and their statistics entries are gently massaged in order to make them fit those roles. Further, each of these variants comes with brand new specially-crafted special abilities, which are unique to *Exotic Encounters* and not found anywhere else.

This particular installment of *Exotic Encounters* focuses on the dryad. These tree-bound women of the woods are longtime favorites of the fantasy genre, and can easily serve both as quest-givers and allies, but also make for excellent villains and other obstacles. Rather than create dryads at a wide variety of CRs, this *Exotic Encounters* does things a little differently, and provides three very different styles of dryad that all appear at the same CR (CR 5). While each of these dryads (ashbound, oakbound, and yewbound) are flavorfully differentiated by the type of tree to which they bond, they are wildly different mechanically, with the ashbound dryad serving as a charismatic manipulator and seductress, the oakbound dryad serving as a stout warrior and dispenser of great wisdom, and the yewbound dryad being a powerful mage capable of inflicting great curses.

Each of the dryads included in this book has all of the standard dryad abilities, in addition to their own new special abilities. The standard dryad abilities are reproduced below.

Tree Meld (Su): A dryad can meld with any tree, similar to how the spell *meld into stone* functions. She can remain melded with a tree as long as she wishes.

Tree Dependent (Su): A dryad is mystically bonded to a single, enormous tree and must never stray more than 300 yards from it. Most dryad trees are oak trees, but other trees function as well (often having subtle influences on a specific dryad's personality and appearance). A dryad who moves more than 300 yards away from her bonded tree immediately becomes sickened. Every hour thereafter, she must make a DC 15 Fortitude save to resist becoming nauseated for an hour. A dryad that is out of range of her bonded tree for 24 hours takes 1d6 points of Constitution damage, and another 1d6 points of Constitution damage every day that follows—eventually, this separation kills the dryad. A dryad can forge a new bond with a new tree by performing a 24-hour ritual and making a successful DC 20 Will save.

Wild Empathy (Su): This functions as the druid's wild empathy class feature, except that the dryad has a +6 racial bonus on the check. Dryads with druid levels add this racial modifier to their wild empathy checks.

Woodcraft (Ex): A dryad has a +6 racial bonus to Craft checks involving wood, and is always treated as if she had masterwork artisan's woodworking tools when making such checks.

Ashbound Dryad

The creature before you resembles a beautiful young woman with alabaster white skin, with flowers in her hair and dressed only in a simple outfit made of leaves and vines. On closer inspection, you realize that her skin, while smooth, is actually a white wood, and that her hair is not filled with flowers, but rather made up of them. She giggles and smirks at your surprise.

DRYAD, ASHBOUND

CR 5

XP 1,600

CN Medium fey Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +3 natural) hp 49 (9d6+18); regeneration 5 (fire) Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +8 DR 5/cold iron Weaknesses ash dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. **Melee** +*1* dagger +9 (1d4+1)

Ranged masterwork longbow +9 (1d8) Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

Constant—speak with plants

At Will—entangle (DC 16), tree shape, wood shape (1 lb.

only)

3/day— cat's grace, eagle's splendor, tree stride 1/day—daylight, remove curse, remove disease

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 20 Base Atk +4; CMB +4; CMD 18 Feats Great Fortitude, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse Skills Climb +12, Craft (sculpture) +14, Handle Animal +14, Escape Artist +18, Knowledge (nature) +14, Perception +14, Stealth +18, Survival +11; Racial Modifiers +6 craft (wood) Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan; speak with plants SQ ash bond, tree meld, wild empathy, woodcraft

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests

Organization solitary, pair, or coven (3-8)

Treasure standard (+*1 dagger*, masterwork longbow with 20 arrows, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Ash Bond (Su): An ashbound dryad can choose to form a bond with a single, specific ash tree. Doing so requires that she perform a special ritual which requires eight hours of uninterrupted meditation each day for an entire week. Once this ritual is complete, the ashbound dryad gains DR 10/piercing, and any creature that looks at her must succeed on a Will save (DC 19) or be affected as though by the spell *charm monster*. If the ashbound dryad travels further than 300 yards from the tree she is bonded to, she loses these benefits, and suffers a -4 penalty to her Charisma score for as long as she remains more than 300 feet away from her bonded tree. The ashbound dryad can sever her connection to a given tree in a special ritual that requires eight hours of uninterrupted meditation. An ashbound dryad can never be bonded to more than one tree in this way at any given time. The saving throw DC for the *charm monster* ability is Charisma-based.

Ash Dependency (Su): An ashbound dryad does not necessarily bond to a single, specific tree, as a standard dryad does. Instead, she is effectively bound to all ash trees simultaneously. This functions as the tree dependency weakness of the standard dryad, except that the ashbound dryad does not suffer any ill effects as long as she is within 300 yards of any ash tree, rather than one specific tree. Even if the ashbound dryad chooses to form a bond with a specific ash tree (see ash bond), she still does not suffer the normal penalties associated with the tree dependency weakness as long as she is within 300 yards of any ash tree.

Regeneration (Su): An ashbound dryad that is currently exposed to bright light (including direct sunlight, and the effects of her *daylight* spell-like ability) gains regeneration 5. This regeneration can be overcome by fire, or simply by removing the ashbound dryad from the bright light.

Vibrant Growth (Sp): With a touch, an ashbound dryad can cause a single plant or animal to grow into a giant version of itself. This functions as the spell *animal growth*, except that it also functions on creatures of the magical beast, plant, and vermin types. While this does not grant the ashbound dryad any direct control over the creature in question, it does cause the animal to have its attitude towards all creatures other than animals, fey, magical beasts, plants, or vermin to become hostile, making it easy for the ashbound dryad to use this ability to cause the creature to attack nearby enemies that are not one of those creature types.

Ecology

While average dryads can be found bonded to a single tree of any sort, some dryads, such as the ashbound dryad, come from a more specific lineage, and their ties to nature manifest somewhat differently. Ashbound dryads are typically the result of dryad unions with druids, sorcerers, or other magically-inclined suitors, although even then they are rare, and it is said that they can only come from a union born of true love. Whatever the case, these fey are even more flighty and mischievous than standard dryads, and almost universally engage in using their beauty to tease and manipulate mortals and others that they encounter. While they enjoy these games immensely, they are aware that sometimes such things end in violence or worse, and are usually prepared to call upon a nearby plant or animal to defend them with their vibrant growth ability. A few ashbound dryads actually develop a taste for the look of surprise on a frustrated would-be attacker's face as she transforms a nearby mouse or bush into a powerful defender.

Oakbound Dryad

The creature before you resembles a woman with dark, swarthy skin. She is clothed only in moss, and as you look more closely, you see that her skin is hard and marbled with a pattern that resembles wood grain.

DRYAD, OAKBOUND

XP 1,600

CG Medium fey

Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +3 natural) hp 49 (9d6+18) Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +8 DR 5/cold iron Weaknesses oak dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee club +8 (1d6+12) Ranged masterwork longbow +9 (1d8)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

Constant—speak with plants

At Will—entangle (DC 13), tree shape, wood shape (1 lb. only)

3/day—barkskin, cure light wounds, tree stride

1/day—bear's endurance, bull's strength, owl's wisdom

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 19, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 14 Base Atk +4; CMB +7; CMD 21 Feats Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Knowledge [history]), Stealthy, Weapon Focus (club) Skills Climb +15, Craft (sculpture) +14, Escape Artist +6, Handle Animal +11, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (nature) +14, Perception +14, Stealth +18, Survival +11; Racial Modifiers +6 craft (wood) Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan; *speak with plants* SQ arboreal awareness, lore of the forest, might of oaks, oaken bond, tree meld, wild empathy, woodcraft

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests **Organization** solitary, pair, or conclave (3-8) **Treasure** standard (club, masterwork longbow with 20 arrows, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Arboreal Awareness (Su): As a full-round action, an oakbound dryad can reach out with her senses to a nearby oak tree, allowing her to see and hear as though she were looking from a point on the surface of that oak tree. The oakbound dryad does not need to be familiar with the particular oak tree in order to use this ability. Whenever she uses this ability, she intuitively becomes aware of the direction and relative distance of all oak trees within range of the ability, and can choose which one to use as the location for this ability, as well was which direction she will be facing. The oakbound dryad can maintain this effect as a move action each round. As long as she uses this ability, her body is treated as being blind, deaf, and otherwise unable to sense. This ability only allows the dryad to sense things from the location of the tree. While she can use her spells and spell like abilities, move, and attack, she does so at the location of her body, not the tree that she is using for this ability.

Lore of the Forest (Sp): By meditating in front of an oak tree for 1 hour, an oakbound dryad can commune with it, and through it with the essence of nature itself, in order to gain deeper insight into a certain issue. This functions as the spell *commune*, except that the oakbound dryad may always ask up to 20 questions. For all other purposes relating to this ability, her caster level for this effect is equal to her Hit Dice.

Might of Oaks (Ex): An oakbound dryad deals an amount of additional damage on a successful melee attack equal to its Hit Dice. If the oakbound dryad is using the Power Attack feat, this bonus is doubled.

Oak Dependency (Su): An oakbound dryad does not necessarily bond to a single, specific oak tree, as a standard dryad does. Instead, she is effectively bound to all oak trees simultaneously. This functions as the tree dependency weakness of the standard dryad, except that the oakbound dryad does not suffer any ill effects as long as she is within 300 yards of any oak tree, rather than one specific tree. Even if the oakbound dryad chooses to form a bond with a specific oak tree (see oaken bond), she still does not suffer the normal penalties associated with the tree dependency weakness as long as she is within 300 yards of any oak tree.

Oaken Bond (Su): An oakbound dryad can choose to form a bond with a single, specific oak. Doing so requires that she perform a special ritual which requires eight hours of uninterrupted meditation each day for an entire week. Once this ritual is complete, the oakbound dryad gains DR 10/slashing and a +4 bonus to both her Strength and Wisdom scores as long as she is within 300 yards of the tree to which she is bonded. If the dryad travels further than 300 yards from the tree she is bonded to, she loses these benefits, and also suffers a -2 penalty to her Strength and Wisdom scores for as long as she remains more than 300 feet away from her bonded tree. The oakbound dryad can sever her connection to a given tree in a special ritual that requires eight hours of uninterrupted meditation. An oakbound dryad can never be bonded to more than one tree in this way at any given time.

Ecology

CR 5

While average dryads can be found bonded to a single tree of any sort, some dryads, such as the oakbound dryad, come from a more pure lineage, and their ties to nature manifest somewhat differently. Oakbound dryads are able to call upon both the wisdom and might that is commonly associated with their trees. They tend to be much taller than other dryads, and often the pattern of leaves in their hair forms crowns, wreathes, or other signifiers of wisdom an authority. They are typically well-respected by standard dryads, who often come to them seeking advice, or aid in dealing with matters that are outside of the range of their tree.

Yewbound Dryad

The creature before you appears at first to be a stopped old crone with dark skin and lank, mossy hair. Upon closer inspection, however, you realize that her skin is in fact bark-like and horribly scarred, and that her hair is not moss-like, but actually some kind of plant. She glowers at you sullenly.

DRYAD, YEWBOUND

CR 5

XP 1,600 CE Medium fey

Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+4 Dex, +3 natural) hp 49 (9d6+18) Fort +6, Ref +10, Will +8 DR 5/cold iron Weaknesses yew dependency

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +9 (1d4) Ranged masterwork longbow +9 (1d8) Special Attacks touch of ages Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th)

Constant—speak with plants

At Will—entangle (DC 15), tree shape, wood shape (1 lb. only)

3/day—fear (DC 19), ray of enfeeblement (DC 15), tree stride

1/day—bestow curse (DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18
Base Atk +4; CMB +3; CMD 17
Feats Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Stealthy, Toughness, Weapon Finesse
Skills Climb +11, Craft (sculpture) +14, Intimidate +16, Escape Artist +18, Knowledge (nature) +14, Perception +14, Stealth +18, Survival +11; Racial Modifiers +6 craft (wood)
Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan; speak with plants
SQ evergreen, tree meld, wild empathy, woodcraft, yew bond

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests **Organization** solitary, pair, or coven (3-8) **Treasure** standard (+*1 dagger*, masterwork longbow with 20

arrows, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Evergreen (Su): Yewbound dryads are immune to the effects of aging, including effects that would magically alter their age.

Touch of Ages (Su): A yewbound dryad can alter a creature's age with a touch, causing them to rapidly wither into old age, or restoring them to youthful vigor. If the target is unwilling, the yewbound dryad must succeed on a melee touch attack to use this ability. The touched creature

must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 18) or have their age altered. The yewbound dryad can choose to either increase or decrease the target's age. In either case, the amount by which the target's age changes is equal to 2d20 years. If this causes the affected creature to change age categories (such as from old to venerable), then their physical ability scores are adjusted accordingly, but changes in age resulting from this ability do not affect a character's mental ability scores. This cannot cause a creature to age beyond its maximum age, and creatures that would be aged to that point are instead aged to exactly 1 year before they would die of old age. Regardless of whether or not the target succeeds its saving throw, it is forever after immune to the touch of ages ability of that particular yewbound dryad. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based.

Yew Bond (Su): A yewbound dryad can choose to form a bond with a single, specific yew. Doing so requires that she perform a special ritual which requires eight hours of uninterrupted meditation each day for an entire week. Once this ritual is complete, the yewbound dryad gains DR 10/bludgeoning, and the saving throw DCs of her spelllike abilities are increased by +2. If the yewbound dryad travels further than 300 yards from the tree she is bonded to, she loses these benefits, and the saving throw DCs of her spell-like abilities are decreased by -1 for as long as she remains more than 300 feet away from her bonded tree. The yewbound dryad can sever her connection to a given tree in a special ritual that requires eight hours of uninterrupted meditation. A yewbound dryad can never be bonded to more than one tree in this way at any given time.

Yew Dependency (Su): A yewbound dryad does not necessarily bond to a single, specific tree, as a standard dryad does. Instead, she is effectively bound to all yew trees simultaneously. This functions as the tree dependency weakness of the standard dryad, except that the yewbound dryad does not suffer any ill effects as long as she is within 300 yards of any yew tree, rather than one specific tree. Even if the yewbound dryad chooses to form a bond with a specific yew tree (see yew bond), she still does not suffer the normal penalties associated with the tree dependency weakness as long as she is within 300 yards of any yew tree.

Ecology

While average dryads can be found bonded to a single tree of any sort, some dryads, such as the yewbound dryad, come from a more specific lineage, and their ties to nature manifest somewhat differently. Yewbound dryads are not common, and are usually only born as the result of a union between a mortal and a dryad, which end in the mortal spurning or otherwise betraying the dryad. The bitter resentment and hate that the dryad feels towards the mortal fester within her and affect her offspring, which is born twisted, hideous, and scarred. Yewborn dryads are as hideous in personality as they are in appearance, and petty, sadistic, and vengeful to a fault. Though they are often sought out in order to reverse the effects of aging (magical or otherwise), doing so is a dangerous proposition, as convincing a yew dryad to lend its aid is no small task, and requires a great deal of flattery and bribery.

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Exotic Encounters: Dryads

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.

Exotic Gnoounters takes a single, iconic monster, and creates three new variants on that theme. These variants aren't simple tweaks, and are more than simply advancing or removing hit Dice, though that occurs as well. Each of these three variations on the monster's theme has a specific, flavorful goal in mind, and a role to play, and their statistics entries are gently massaged in order to make them fit those roles. Further, each of these variants comes with brand new specially-crafted special abilities, which are unique to Exotic Encounters and not found anywhere else.

This particular installment of Gootic Gnoounters focuses on the dryad. These tree-bound women of the woods are longtime favorites of the fantasy genre, and can easily serve both as quest-givers and allies, but also make for excellent villains and other obstacles. Rather than create dryads at a wide variety of QRs, this Gootic Gnoounters does things a little differently, and provides three very different styles of dryad that all appear at the same QR (QR 5). While each of these dryads Gashbound, oakbound, and yewbound) are flavorfully differentiated by the type of tree to which they bond, they are wildly different mechanically, with the ashbound dryad serving as a charismatic manipulator and seductress, the oakbound dryad serving as a stout warrior and dispenser of great wisdom, and the yewbound dryad being a powerful mage capable of inflicting great curses.

