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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 speciallycrafted special abilities, which are unique to *Exotic Encounters* and not found anywhere else.

This particular installment of *Exotic* Encounters focuses on the majestic griffon. Griffons have captured our imagination since ancient times, and have long been considered to be the king of beasts. More modern approaches to griffons see them as anything from noble steeds to feral and savage monsters, and everything in between. Here, you will find the dwarf griffon, a much smaller sub-species that is known for its propensity for diving hit-and-run tactics, the myllisthor griffon, a species of griffon speciallybred by elves to serve as elite mounts for their best scouts, and which are capable of flying at extreme speeds, and the redclaw griffon, tough and territorial beasts that live in high and rugged terrain and fight with an extreme and savage ferocity.



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Dwarf Griffon

This creature resembles a small bobcat, with covered in short, tan fur. Its head resembles that of a falcon or other bird of prey, and two sleek, pointed wings, seemingly too large for its body, are folded above its back. The creature stretches them, revealing an impressive, 5-foot wingspan, then, with a shriek, begins to soar down towards you, talons outstretched.

GRIFFON, DWARF

CR 2

N Small magical beast

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +9

DEFENSE

XP 600

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

hp 16 (3d10)

Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +2

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)

Melee bite +3 (1d4-1), 2 talons +4 (1d6-1)

Special Attacks diving charge, go for the eyes, pounce, rake (2 claws +3, 1d4-1)

STATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8 Base Atk +3; CMB +1; CMD 15 (19 vs. trip) Feats Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (talons) Skills Fly +14, Perception +12, Stealth +12; Racial Modifiers +4 Fly, +4 Perception SQ hunting talons Languages none

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests, hills, mountains, and plains

Organization solitary or pair **Treasure** incidental

Diving Charge (Ex): Whenever a dwarf griffon uses the charge action while flying, after making its attack, it may continue its movement. If it chooses to do so, the dwarf griffon must continue moving in the same direction that it was moving before attacking, and its combined movement before and after the attack must not exceed twice its fly speed. Go for the Eyes (Ex): Whenever a dwarf griffon scores a critical hit with a talon or rake attack, the target must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 11) or be blinded for 2d4 rounds. The saving throw DC is Constitution-based.

Hunting Talons (Ex): Dwarf griffons fight and hunt primarily with their talons, and as a result their talons deal damage as though the dwarf griffon were two size categories larger than it actually is.

Ecology

Dwarf griffons are so named for their size, as they are much smaller than the better known griffons, being closer to the size of a dog or wild cat than the horse-like stature of their better known cousin. In fact, dwarf griffons are actually much more common than their larger and more famous relatives, and can survive in a much wider variety of climates. In general, dwarf griffons tend to live in a fashion similar to most birds of prey, and are primarily ambush predators, swooping down on prey from above and killing it before it even knows that it is there. Their preferred hunting tactic is to find a good tree branch or similar perch and wait until they find movement, then soar down upon their victim with incredible speed and accuracy.

While the average dwarf griffon subsists primarily on small rodents and occasionally larger animals, like young cats, dogs, and, occasionally even deer or antelope, depending on their environment, they usually do not bother attacking humans or other Medium-size creatures. This is not a hard and fast rule, however, and it is not unknown for particularly hungry dwarf griffons to attack creatures much larger than themselves, in which case they feature hit-and-run tactics, swooping down and clawing their target in passing, then circling and attacking again. They are smart enough to target a foe's eyes first, in order to blind him. It's also not uncommon for a dwarf griffon to attack larger creatures if they come near its nest, and, unlike birds of prey, they generally prefer to make their nests on the ground, in caves, or, when no caves are available, in a hole it digs itself. Of course, the dwarf griffon needs no excuse to attack halflings and other Small humanoids, as it considers creatures of its own size to be prey.

Myllisthor Griffon

This beautiful creature resembles a blending of earth and sky. Its body is like that of a lion, with a burnished-gold coat, and four catlike paws. Its back is covered with silvery-white feathers, however, as are its wings, which have a span of nearly 12 feet. Its head resembles that of a majestic eagle, and its golden eyes reflect an intelligence beyond that of a mere animal.

GRIFFON, MYLLISTHOR

XP 2,400

N Large magical beast

Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+6 Dex, +4 natural, -1 size)

hp 60 (8d10+16)

Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +4

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)

Melee bite +10 (1d6+2), 2 claws +9 (1d6+2; 19-20/ x2)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks pounce, rake (2 claws +7, 1d4+3) STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 22, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 12 Base Atk +8; CMB +12; CMD 28 (32 vs. trip) Feats Flyby Attack, Skill Focus (Fly), Weapon Focus (bite), Wingover

Skills Acrobatics +15, Fly +13, Perception +12; Racial Modifiers +4 Acrobatics, +4 Perception SQ burst of speed, headlong dive, razor claws Languages Common (cannot speak) ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests and mountains **Organization** solitary, pair, or pride (6-10) **Treasure** incidental

Burst of Speed (Ex): As a full-round action, a myllisthor griffon can move up to six times its fly speed. Its movement must be in a straight line, and it cannot increase its altitude as part of this movement.

Headlong Dive (Ex): Whenever a myllisthor griffon is flying, if it descends at an angle of at least 45 degrees, it can move up to one and a half times as far as it would normally be able to (for example, if the myllisthor griffon used the charge action, and moved downward at at least a 45 degree angle while doing so, it could move a total of 240 feet, which is one and a half times as far as it could normally charge).

Razor Claws (Ex): A myllisthor griffon naturally sharpens its claws with its beak, honing them to razor points and making them more lethal. A myllisthor griffon's claw attacks threaten a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20. For the purposes of advanced myllisthor griffons, this effect stacks with the Improved Critical feat.

Ecology

CR 6

Myllisthor griffons are not naturally occuring in nature. Instead, these masterpieces of animal husbandry and training are the result of centuries-long breeding programs by certain elven communities, who originally bred them in order to serve as mounts for their soldiers. True to typical elven sensibilities, the myllisthor griffons ("myllisthor" being elven for "silver wing") were bred primarily for their speed, grace, and beauty. They are among the fastest known species of griffons, and can reach truly unparalleled speeds while diving.

More than simply being fast, however, myllisthor griffons are bred for combat situations, and serve as much more deadly mounts than their better-known and more common cousins. Further, they are prized for their uncommon intelligence, and are sometimes said to be smarter than those who ride them.

Not all myllisthor griffons are raised in captivity, however. It is the custom of most elven griffon-breeders to release their griffons into the wild once they reach a certain age, as a sort of reward for their years of service. This has led to several isolated prides of myllisthor griffons taking up territory of their own, and these communities have slowly grown and expanded over time. So far, these myllisthor griffons have not had much of an impact on the ecosystems where they take up residence, but time will tell if this trend will continue, as their numbers continue to swell.

Myllisthor griffons are highly prized, and fetch a much higher price than normal griffons. In most elven lands, the price for poaching a myllisthor griffon, or stealing one of their eggs, is death: assuming the griffon doesn't see to it first.

Redclaw Griffon

The creature before you is a fearsome blend of two terrible predators. Its long, sleek body resembles that of a lion, except that each of its four powerful legs ends in the talons of a hawk or eagle, but with dark red scales, instead of yellow. The creature's head is also avian, with a fierce, sharplycurved beak designed for ripping and tearing, and two large wings covered in golden feathers.

GRIFFON, REDCLAW

CR 9

XP 6,400 N Large magical beast

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +13 DEFENSE AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+3 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size) hp 102 (12d10+36) Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +3 Defensive Abilities ferocity OFFENSE Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average)

Melee bite +15 (1d8+3), 2 talons +15 (1d8+3) **Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Space 10 It., Reach 5 I

Special Attacks avenging strike, pounce, rake (2 claws +15, 1d4+3)

STATISTICS

Str 17, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11 Base Atk +12; CMB +17; CMD 30 (31 vs. trip) Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Natural Attack (talon), Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (talon) Skills Fly +10, Perception +13; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

SQ wounded rage

Languages Common (cannot speak) ECOLOGY

Environment temperate or cold mountains **Organization** solitary, pair, or pride (6-10) **Treasure** incidental

Avenging Strike (Ex): Whenever a creature attacks a redclaw griffon and misses, the redclaw griffon may make an attack of opportunity against that creature. The redclaw griffon cannot make more than one attack of opportunity in this way against a single creature in any given round, though it can still make other attacks of opportunity against that creature, if it provokes other attacks of opportunity and the redclaw griffon has not already used all of its attacks of opportunity for that round.

Wounded Rage (Ex): When a redclaw griffon's hit points are reduced to less than 1/2 its maximum hit points, it enters a furious frenzy of destruction. The redclaw griffon gains a +4 bonus to its Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores, and suffers a -2 penalty to AC. Additionally, a redclaw griffon that is raging in this way must attack a living creature each round, if able. The rage lasts for 1 minute, or until the redclaw griffon goes at least 3 rounds without making an attack. Once the rage ends, the redclaw griffon is fatigued for 1 minute.

Ecology

This particularly rare breed of griffon is only found in a few isolated regions, and they have adapted themselves to survive in the harsh and barren terrain in which they are found. Redclaw griffons, named as much for their violent attitude as for the coloration of their talons, are a highly territorial species of griffons that can only be found roosting in the sides of towering cliffs or near the tops of craggy, barren mountains.

Somewhat slower than their more common cousins, redclaw griffons more than make up for their lack of speed with their terrible tempers and their deadly and ferocious combat ability, and some redclaw griffons have been known to take down creatures as much as twice their size. Social animals, redclaw griffons nearly always make their roosts in large prides, but they are very territorial and agressive, and most of their interaction with other griffons, redclaw or otherwise, involves constant squabbling, fighting, and shows of dominance. Redclaw griffons never hunt as a group, and always do their killing on their own. Sages and scholars speculate as to why they would bother roosting together, since they seem to derive no benefit from it, and to date the prevailing theory is that these griffons actually enjoy and thrive on the constant battling with their kin. This theory is supported by the fact that redclaw griffons are notoriously difficult to domesticate, and while some attempts to use them as combat mounts have met with limited success, even the best trained redclaw griffons have a distressing tendency to maul their handlers, which has prevented them from becoming popular as mounts.

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Exotic Encounters: Griffons

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