

Credits

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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 medusas. One of the most iconic creatures of greek mythology, there have been many interpretations of the medusa throughout the years, from cthonian monstrosity to beautiful (and wronged) damsel. The first new medusa in this book, the vampiric medusa (CR 5), turns her enemies to stone figuratively, rather than literally, by filling their hearts with despair, and drains blood through her bites, though she is not a true vampire. The strange headsman's medusa (CR 5), inspired in part by the famous beheading by Perseus, is a medusa head that can act on its own, forming a nasty surprise for a party that thinks it's defeated its petrifying foe. Finally, the snake queen medusa (CR 11) is a bigger and meaner medusa with a heavier serpent influence, and whose blood, if spilled, transforms into a swarm of deadly snakes.



Image Medusa by Caravaggio

Vampiric Medusa

The woman before you is an image of beauty perverted, twisted, and made desolate. She has flawless alabaster skin and an appealing shape, which makes a terrible contrast with the crimson blood that constantly trickles from what appear to be empty eye sockets. Her hair is a tangled mass of black snakes, whose eyes glow with a faint red light.

MEDUSA, VAMPIRIC

CR 5

XP 1,600

NE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 natural) hp 57 (6d10+24)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee four snake bites +8 (1d4 plus blood drain) Ranged mwk shortbow +9/+4 (1d6/x3) Special Attacks mournful gaze

Special Attacks mourne

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 15, **Con** 18, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 19 **Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 20

Feats Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +10, Disguise +10, Intimidate +13, Perception +14, Stealth +11; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

Languages Common

SQ partially blind

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate marshes and underground Organization solitary

Treasure standard (masterwork shortbow with 20 arrows, other treasure)

All-Around Vision (Ex): A vampiric medusa's snake-hair allows her to see in all directions. Vampiric medusas gain a +4 racial bonus to Perception checks and cannot be flanked.

Blood Drain (Su): Whenever a vampiric medusa successfully damages a living creature with a snake bite attack, it deals an additional 2 points of damage as it drinks blood from the target. For each point of additional damage dealt in this way, the vampiric medusa heals 1 point of damage.

Mournful Gaze (Su): A vampiric medusa's gaze does not turn the target to stone, but rather cripples him with overwhelming depression, eventually rendering him unable to act. Treat this as a gaze attack with a range of 30 feet. A successful Will save (DC 17) negates the effect. On the first failed saving throw, the target suffers a -4 morale penalty to AC, attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws. On the second failed saving throw, the target is also slowed, as the spell *slow*. On the third failed saving throw, the target is stunned. These penalties remain until the target goes for a full minute without failing a saving throw to resist this effect (the target must either avoid the gaze attack, or must succeed on the saving throw for the entire minute). This is a mind-affecting emotion effect. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based.

Partially Blind (Su): A vampiric medusa sees through the eyes on the serpents that make up its hair. This renders it immune to any vision-based attacks (such as gaze attacks or blinding effects) that affect a limited number of creatures. She is still susceptible to vision-based attacks that affect all creatures in an area.

Ecology

Also known in some regions as the mournful medusa, these creatures are not actually vampires in the traditional sense, as they are not undead, although they do drink blood. While the gaze of most medusas turn their victims to stone, a vampiric medusa's gaze instead causes those who view her to be overcome with despair and despondency, and a profound sense of nihilism, which quickly renders them just as helpless. Once they have successfully incapacitated their victim, vampiric medusae drain it of blood.

Scholars are uncertain as to why vampiric medusas lack traditional eyes. Some believe that all vampiric medusas are ritually maimed at birth, others believe it is somehow a natural trait. Either way, this deformity may well be the source of the creature's ability to invoke despair.

Headsman's Medusa

This horrible monstrosity resembles the severed head of a beautiful woman, but its hair is a writhing nest of snakes, and beneath its chin is another writhing mass of pale green tendrils, which support it like legs. It glares at you malevolently, and lets out a hiss that seems to come from all its mouths at once.

MEDUSA, HEADSMAN'S

CR 5

XP 1,600

LE Tiny aberration

Init +7; Senses all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +3 natural, +2 size)

hp 52 (8d8+16)

Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +7

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee snake bite +11 (1d4-2 plus poison) Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach o ft.

Special Attacks petrifying gaze

STATISTICS

Str 7, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15 Base Atk +6; CMB +2; CMD 15 (can't be tripped) Feats Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse Skills Bluff +10, Disguise +10, Intimidate +13, Perception +16, Stealth +14; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception Languages Common SQ claim body ECOLOGY Environment temperate marshes and

underground Organization solitary Treasure none

All-Around Vision (Ex): A headsman's medusa's snake-hair allows her to see in all directions. Headsman's medusas gain a +4 racial bonus to Perception checks and cannot be flanked.

Claim Body (Su): A headsman's medusa that encounters the corpse of a female humanoid creature that has been dead for no more than 48 hours can decapitate it (severing the neck with her snake-hair's teeth), and then attach herself to the body with the tendrils on her underside. This process takes 1 hour, and it takes a further 24 hours for her to gain control over the body she attaches herself to. During this time, the headsman's medusa releases enzymes that mutate the body into that of a standard medusa, and, once the process is complete, the headsman's medusa becomes a standard medusa that bears a striking resemblance to the stolen corpse from the neck down. The headsman's medusa then adopts the statistics of a standard medusa, except that if she is ever reduced to o hit points, or is specifically decapitated, her head detaches, and she regains the statistics of a headsman's medusa, with 1/2 her maximum hit points (26).

Petrifying Gaze (Su): Turn to stone permanently, 30 feet, Fortitude DC 16 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 18; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d3 Con; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Ecology

These strange creatures are believed to come from an alternate dimension, and their connection to more mundane medusas is unclear. In their natural state, they look like the severed head of a medusa, though they usually spend most of their time attached to a hijacked humanoid body. In this form, they are indistinguishable from a standard medusa by any non-magical means.

Some scholars believe that these creatures were the precursors of the modern medusas, who have somehow lost the ability to survive as just a head. A few scholars proclaim that all medusa must actually be these creatures, and that the "standard" medusas simply play dead and avoid detection, but they are generally ignored.

If a headsman's medusa is encountered while in the form of a normal medusa, treat it as a single CR 8 creature for the purposes of determining the difficulty of the encounter.

Snake Queen Medusa

The creature before you has the head and torso of a woman, but is unmistakably monstrous. Its skin is covered in fine, emerald-green scales, and where its legs should be, instead, is a thick, snakelike body, nearly seven feet long, and three feet around at the thickest point. Most striking of all is her hair, a nest of writhing snakes of all different sorts. They hiss at you, as does the woman herself, revealing a pair of huge fangs, dripping venom.

MEDUSA, SNAKE QUEEN

CR 11

XP 12,800

LE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +8; Senses all-around vision, darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +21

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+4 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 123 (13d10+52)

Fort +8, Ref +12, Will +9 DR 10/magic; SR 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +18 (1d6+2 plus poison), four snake bites +13 (1d4+1 plus poison) Ranged +1 composite longbow [+2 Str] +18/+13/+8

(1d8+3/x3)

Special Attacks stony glare STATISTICS

Str 14, Dex 19, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15 Base Atk +13; CMB +15; CMD 29

Feats Ability Focus (poison), Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (snake bite) Skills Bluff +15, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (nature) +14, Perception +21, Stealth +20; Racial Modifiers +4 Perception

Languages Common

SQ serpent blood

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate marshes and underground Organization solitary

Treasure double (+1 composite longbow [+2 Str] with 20 arrows, other treasure)

All-Around Vision (Ex): A snake queen medusa's snake-hair allows her to see in all

directions. Medusas gain a +4 racial bonus to Perception checks and cannot be flanked.

Poison (Ex): Bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 22; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d4 Str; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitutionbased, and includes a +2 bonus from Ability Focus.

Poison (Ex): Snake bite—injury; *save* Fort DC 20; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Dex; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Serpent Blood (Su): A snake queen medusa's blood, when spilled, transforms into a writhing mass of serpents. Whenever a snake queen medusa takes 10 or more points of piercing or slashing damage in a single round, a venomous snake swarm appears adjacent to the snake queen medusa (as a swarm, it can share its square with other creatures). This swarm obeys the snake queen medusa's commands and fights on her behalf, and does not harm her, even if it shares her square. If the venomous snake swarm is not dispersed within five minutes, it disperses automatically, as the snakes wander off.

Stony Glare (Su): A snake queen medusa's gaze is not as potent as that of their more common kin. As a standard action, the snake queen medusa can glare at a single living creature within 60 feet. If that creature can see her, it must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 20) or become staggered for 2d4 rounds. If the target is already staggered, and fails his saving throw, he is petrified permanently, instead. The saving throw DC is Constitution-based.

Ecology

These creatures, sometimes known as medusa queens, are larger and more primal than their smaller relatives. Though their gaze is somewhat less lethal than that of the average medusa, their venom is far deadlier, and the fact that their blood transmutes into deadly snakes makes them even more dangerous. Some snake queen medusas have been known to deliberately injure themselves in order to create serpent minions, usually in a place their vanity can abide. Permission to copy, modify and distribute the files collectively known as the System Reference Document ("SRD") is granted solely through the use of the Open Gaming License, Version 1.0a.

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Exotic Encounters: Medusas

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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