

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

This particular installment of *Exotic Encounters* focuses on will-o'-wisps. While these mysterious creatures of the swamplands are mostly known for their tendency to lead victims on wild goose chases into dangerous situations, the fact of the matter is that Pathfinder will-o'wisps are built more for mobile beaters with ridiculously high attack, damage, AC, and maneuverability (plus constant invisibility) than they are for being elusive or tricky. While all of these will-o'-wisps can certainly hold their own in a fight, we aimed to capture a bit more of the essence of the wisp. The first result was the wispling (CR 2), a smaller, weaker version of the will-o'-wisp that can instill fear on opponents with its unnerving touch and ghostly lights abilities, and then bask in that fear with their feast on fear ability. The next new will-o'-wisp is the dark guide will-o'-wisp (CR 9), whose guidelights ability compels those who see it to follow it, regardless of where it takes them. These corrupted will-o'-wisps feed on death, more than fear, and lead travelers to early graves in order to sup on their last breaths. Finally, the devil's eye willo'-wisp (CR 13) appears at first to be a simple cloud of illuminated marsh gas, but, in fact, has numerous powers, including its maddening witchlight and its terrifying ability to split into multiple creatures.

Wispling

A tiny ball of eldritch-blue flame hangs in the air before you, bobbing and weaving ponderously. When the ambient light catches it from just the right angle, it almost appears as though you can see a face outlined in its glowing frame, but only just for a brief moment. It slowly advances on you, as though curious...or perhaps menacing.

WILL-O'-WISP, WISPLING

CR 2

XP 600 CE Tiny aberration (air)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +8 DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 14 (+2 deflection, +5 Dex, +2 size)

hp 13 (3d8)

Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +5

Defensive Abilities limited magic immunity

OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect) Melee chill +7 touch (1d4 cold plus unnerving touch) Special Attacks feast on fear, ghostly lights Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd) 3/day—invisibility (self only) STATISTICS

Str 1, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 14 Base Atk +2; CMB -5; CMD 8 Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse Skills Acrobatics +9, Fly +21, Perception +8, Stealth +17 Languages Common ECOLOGY Environment any forest or swamp

Organization solitary, pair, or swarm (4 – 32) Treasure incidental SPECIAL ABILITIES

Feast on Fear (Su): As a standard action, a wispling can feed on the fear of all creatures within 30 feet of it. Each living, non-wispling creature within range that is shaken or subject to a fear effect suffers 2d6 points of negative energy damage. Any creatures that are frightened or panicked suffer 2d10 points of negative energy damage, instead. Undead creatures cannot be healed in this way. The wispling gains a number of temporary hit points equal to the amount of damage dealt this way. Further, for every 10 points of damage dealt, its deflection bonus to AC increases by +1, and it gains a +1 bonus on all attack rolls, damage rolls, ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws. These bonuses last for 1 minute. Multiple uses of this ability do not stack: the wispling uses the higher bonus. This ability has no effect on creatures that are not shaken, frightened, panicked, or otherwise subject to a fear effect.

Ghostly Lights (Sp): A wispling can create eerie, dancing lights which frighten those who gaze upon them. This functions as *dancing lights*, except that any creature that sees the lights must succeed on a Will save (DC 12) or become shaken for 1d4 rounds. The wispling can use this ability at will. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based.

Limited Magic Immunity (Ex): Any time a wispling is targeted or affected by a spell that offers spell resistance, it becomes immune to that spell for 24 hours. The wispling gains this protection even if it successfully avoids the spells effects (such as by succeeding on a saving throw). In general, there is a 20% chance that a randomly generated wispling is currently immune to 1d4 spells of 3rd level or lower.

Unnerving Touch (Su): Any creature struck by a wispling's touch attack must succeed on a Will save (DC 13) or become shaken for 1 round. Targets that are already shaken become frightened, instead. This is a fear effect. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based.

Ecology

It is unknown—and hotly debated amongst scholars—whether the wispling is an immature version of a more common will-o'-wisp, or whether it is a separate species altogether. On the one hand, those who believe that they are young will-o'-wisps point out that they have many abilities in common, which seem to be less developed, and that it is easy to imagine a wispling growing to become a will-o'-wisp. On the other hand, those who believe that they are a unique species point out that wisplings have some powers (such as their feast on fear and unnerving touch abilities) that standard will-o'-wisps lack, and that their touch is icy, rather than shocking.

Whatever the case, wisplings may be smaller than more conventional will-o'-wisps, but that doesn't mean that they are any less dangerous. Their touch instills a supernatural sense of fear, as do the lights that they are able to spawn at will, and the wisplings, like the more common will-o'-wisps, feed on this fear, though they do so in a much more dramatic fashion, literally ripping the life essence out of all frightened creatures within close range to them. They tend to burn through the sustenance that they gain in this way rather quickly, and so are constantly on the lookout for new creatures to terrorize in order to remain in peak condition.

Dark Guide Will o' Wisp

A dancing ball of dark purple flames hangs in the air before you. In the center of the flames is the clear, shadowed outline of a human skull, which grins at you evilly as it hangs in the air.

WILL O' WISP, DARK GUIDE

XP 6,400

CE Small aberration (air)

Init +11; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +20

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 25, flat-footed 17 (+6 deflection, +7 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 size) hp 78 (12d8+12) Fort +5, Ref +11, Will +11

Defensive Abilities natural invisibility; **Immune** divination OFFENSE

Speed fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee drain +17 touch (4d6 negative energy plus unnerving touch)

Special Attacks guidelights

STATISTICS

Str 1, Dex 25, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 23 Base Atk +9; CMB +3; CMD 26 Feats Ability Focus (guidelights), Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Finesse Skills Acrobatics +22, Bluff +18, Escape Artist +22, Fly +32, Perception +20, Stealth +26 Languages Aklo, Common SQ eater of death ECOLOGY Environment any swamp Organization solitary, pair, or string (3-4) Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Eater of Death (Su): Any time a dark guide will-o'wisp is within 30 feet of a dying creature or the corpse of a creature that died within the last hour, it gains fast healing 10.

Guidelights (Sp): As a standard action, a dark guide will-o'-wisp can create a spectral light that compels those who see it to approach it. This functions as *dancing lights*, except that each creature that sees the lights must succeed on a Will save (DC 18), or be compelled to spend each round moving towards the light as quickly as they can. If an affected creature's path would cause it to pass through some obvious peril (such as over a cliff, through a river of lava, or through a square threatened by a foe), he may make a new saving throw with a +4 bonus. If the second saving throw is successful, he stops himself before entering the immediate peril, and can act normally thereafter. Creatures affected by this ability gain a new saving throw each minute, even if their path does not lead them to immediate peril. Creatures that reach the lights are fascinated by them until they succeed on their saving throw or the lights move away from them, at which point they begin moving towards the lights again. Creatures that are currently shaken, frightened, or panicked, or are suffering from a fear effect suffer a -2 penalty on their saving throws to resist this ability. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based.

Immunity to Divination (Ex): Dark guide willo-wisps cannot be detected by magical or supernatural means. Any divination spell that targets a dark guide willo'-wisp fails, and the dark guide will-o'-wisp is treated as automatically succeeding on any saving throw offered by a spell of the divination school. Spells of the scrying subschool that do not target the dark guide will-o'-wisp directly, but which reveal an area that the dark guide will-o'-wisp, as though it were not actually there.

Natural Invisibility (Ex): Dark guide will-o'-wisps have the ability to extinguish their natural glow as a move action, effectively becoming invisible, as per the spell. This ability is inherent, and not subject to the *invisibility* purge spell, nor can a dark guide will-o'-wisp that is using this ability be viewed with *see invisibility*, though it can be seen with *true seeing*.

Unnerving Touch (Su): Any creature struck by a dark guide will-o'-wisp's touch attack must succeed on a Will save (DC 22) or become shaken for 1 minute. Targets that are already shaken become frightened, instead. This is a fear effect. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based.

Ecology

CR 9

It is unclear exactly what causes a dark guide willo'-wisp to come into being, but it is well established that under the right conditions, a standard will-o'-wisp can transform itself into this even more malicious and deadly creature. In addition to having a more potent touch attack than a standard will-o'-wisp, the main thing that sets a dark guide will-o'-wisp apart from more common versions is the fact that they feed primarily on death, rather than on fear. Though a dark guide will-o'-wisp certainly enjoys and revels in fear nearly as much as their kin, they do not derive true sustenance from anything besides the energies of death. As a result, while a normal will-o'-wisp may well let their victim go after they have drunk their fill of fear, a dark guide willo'-wisp is interested in nothing but leading victims to early graves, so that it can sup on their demise.

Scholars theorize that the transformation from a normal will-o'-wisp to a dark guide will-o'-wisp is caused by excessive exposure to death energies, either from killing too many of their victims, or simply being in a place where creatures die particularly frequently. Others believe that the progression from will-o'-wisp to dark guide will-o'-wisp is a simple matter of age. Still others believe that it is exposure to certain necromantic energies that causes the change, and that certain rituals can be used to change any will-o'-wisp into a dark guide instantaneously.

Devil's Eye Will o' Wisp

Before you is a floating cloud of some strangely luminescent green gas, which seems to sparkle in the dim light that it, itself, sheds. It hovers curiously, flitting this way and that, perhaps three feet in diameter, leaving a tiny trail of sparkling green dustmotes in the air behind it as it circles about, before suddenly erupting into half a dozen identical clouds, which begin to spin around you menacingly.

WILL O' WISP, DEVIL'S EYE

CR 13

XP 25,600 CE Small aberration (air, incorporeal) Init +13; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +17 DEFENSE AC 29, touch 29, flat-footed 19 (+8 deflection, +9 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 size) hp 117 (18d8) Fort +6, Ref +15, Will +14 Defensive Abilities incorporeal, reflect magic; DR 5/ good; Resist electricity 10, cold 10, fire 10; SR 24 OFFENSE **Speed** fly 50 ft. (perfect) Melee shock +23 touch (6d8 electricity) **Ranged** 2 electricity rays +23 touch (2d8 electricity) Special Attacks drain life Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th) At Will—dancing lights, darkness, silent image (DC 14) 3/day—invisibility (self only), phantasmal killer (DC 17) 1/day—hallucinatory terrain (DC 17), veil (DC 19) STATISTICS Str -, Dex 29, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 16 Base Atk +13; CMB +21; CMD 48 Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Finesse Skills Acrobatics +29, Bluff +19, Intimidate +19, Fly +39, Perception +25, Stealth +33 Languages Aklo, Common **SO** refraction ECOLOGY **Environment** any swamp **Organization** solitary, pair, or string (3-4) Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Drain Life (Su): As a standard action, a devil's eye will-o'-wisp that is in the same square as a living corporeal creature can attempt to drain the life essence from that creature. This inflicts 4d8 points of negative energy damage, and causes the devil's eye will-o'-wisp to heal a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt in this way.

Reflect Magic (Su): Whenever a devil's eye willo'-wisp's spell resistance protects it from a spell, it reflects that magic back against the caster, causing the caster to suffer the spell's effects, instead. This functions even if the devil's eye will-o'-wisp wasn't directly targeted by the spell (for example, if a devil's eye will-o'-wisp is in the area of a fireball spell, and its spell resistance prevents it from taking damage, then the creature that cast that fireball spell will suffer the damage, instead, even if he is not within the spell's area of effect). This has no effect on spell-like abilities, supernatural abilities, or spells that do not offer spell resistance.

Refraction (Su): As a standard action, a devil's eye will-o'-wisp can cause 1d6 refracted images of itself to emerge from it. These refracted devil's eye will-o'wisps act on the devil's eye will-o'-wisp's initiative, and have identical statistics to the devil's eye will-o'-wisp that created them, except that they have exactly 1 hit point and do not have any damage reduction, energy resistance, or spell resistance. Further, they cannot use the drain life, refraction or witchlight special abilities, or any of the devil's eye will-o'-wisp's spell-like abilities. The refracted devil's eye will-o'-wisps fade after 10 minutes if they have not already been destroyed. A devil's eye will-o'-wisp can use this ability once per hour.

Witchlight (Su): As a move action, a devil's eye will-o'-wisp can cause its nebulous body to be wreathed in a pale, eerie light, which subtly shifts color and intensity in an eerie, bewitching way. The devil's eye will-o'-wisp is affected as though covered in *glitterdust* (imposing a -40 penalty on Stealth checks). Further, any creature that can see the devil's eye will-o'-wisp must succeed on a Will save (DC 22) or become confused. The creature may make a new saving throw each round to end the effect. Otherwise, it remains confused for as long as it can see the devil's eye will-o'-wisp (and the devil's eye will-o'-wisp continues to use this ability), and for 1d4 rounds thereafter. The willo'-wisp can end this effect with another move action, and it lasts indefinitely until it does. The saving throw DC is Charisma-based.

Ecology

Devil's eye will-o'-wisps are attributed as spies for demons, devils, and other evil outsiders in a wide variety of myths and superstitions, but the fact of the matter is that these animated clouds of malice and hatred do not need fiends to make them perform the horrible acts that they are so fond of. Devil's eye will-o'-wisps are sadistic and cruel creatures that delight in causing suffering, especially of a psychological nature. They use their special abilities to confuse their prey, driving them to frustration and desperation, and herding them towards their inevitable demise. When threatened, devil's eye will-o'wisps use their refraction ability to create an army of allies who can quickly take down foes with their electrical rays, ganging up to attack their victims from every angle. 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: Will-o'-Wisps

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