



Welcome to the first Codex Draconis, the line of products that gives you what you need to drop dragons into your games with a minimum of effort and a maximum of options. Here in the first volume of our line, we present options and alternatives for a dozen black dragons, covering every age category of the obsidian lords of the swamps and marshes. Each age category also has three pregenerated treasure hoards, some alternative monster builds, and suggestions on how to build even deadlier dragon encounters.

Dragons are among the most iconic, and most popular, of all fantasy roleplaying game foes. Once the domain exclusively of higher-level adventures, dragons now have rules for every stage of life thanks to changes made in the past few versions of the world's most popular roleplaying game. Setting dragons up in this manner allows wet-behind-the-ears heroes to face dragons early in their careers (though likely they'll be facing dragons the size of housecats). To ensure a dragon is always just the right threat for heroes of any level, dragons are given twelve stages of life that, that, when combined with the many different types of dragons, creates a range of CRs from 2 to 22.

The problem with that, of course, is that it requires a lot of stat blocks, and those take up room. To save space, instead of presenting a full write-up of every dragon at every age category, the game's creators present a set of rules outlining how to write up dragons, and then give a few examples of each type. As a result, although you can find a dragon of the right CR for an encounter, it takes a considerable amount of work to get that dragon ready for the game.

To help with that problem, the fine folks at D20PF SRD.com took on the job of creating full stat blocks for every true dragon of every type, and when we expressed an interest in using those as the starting

point for our Codex Draconis line, they were kind enough to give us their blessing. In addition to their dragon write ups, Codex Draconis: Black Lords of the Marsh presents additional material to expand the ways you can use these dragons and allows you to drop them into your campaign.

## THE BASICS

The biology and ecology of black dragons is the same regardless of age category.

### ECOLOGY

Environment warm marshes

Organization solitary

Treasure triple

Lording over the darkest swamps and marshes, black dragons are the undisputed masters of their domains, ruling through cruelty and intimidation. Those who dwell within a black dragon's reach live in fear. Black dragons make their lairs in remote parts of the swamp, preferably in caves at the bottom of dark and fetid pools. Inside, they pile up their filthy treasure and sleep amid the roots and muck. Black dragons prefer their food a bit rotten and frequently allow a meal to sit in a pool for days before consuming it. Black dragons prefer treasures that do not rot or decay, so their hoards are full of coins, gemstones, jewelry, and other objects made from stone or metal.

**Hoard:** In this section we present pregenerated loot to form a dragon's hoard for each age category. Values are given for triple the normal treasure for an encounter of the dragon's CR (as standard for black

dragons) with values for campaigns using slow, medium, and fast advancement XP charts. Each item is listed with its gp value, to make it easy for you to swap out items from the pregenerated hoard with items you want to provide to your group's characters. The total hoard value is rounded up, so you have some leeway in terms of swapping out items.

**Upping the Ante:** Even dragons can use a little help, and in this section we propose a way to make an encounter with the dragon more dangerous. This might be a note on how it can use items from its hoard, a suggestion on allies (or servants) the dragon might take into battle, or proposals on how to use traps and terrain to the dragon's advantage.

**Alternate Builds:** Each age category also presents one or two alternate builds, representing different paths a black dragon might take over its lifespan. Each alternate build presents a short description of how that dragon's tactics or preferences differ from a typical black dragon, and a list of changes made to the base stat block to create the alternate dragon. Each section that is changed (such as feats) is presented so it can simply be put in place of the same section of the typical dragon's stat block.

## THE DRAGONS

Each of the sections below contains a dragon entry for a specific CR. As noted above in "The Basics," you'll have stats, hoards, and encounter advice for each dragon entry.

### BLACK DRAGON, WYRMLING

*A black-scaled, winged creature no larger than a cat hisses and stares at you with green, intelligent eyes.*

#### WYRMLING BLACK DRAGON CR 3

XP 800

CE Tiny dragon (water)

**Init** +3; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +9

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#### DEFENSE

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

**hp** 30 (4d12+4)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4

**Immune** acid, paralysis, sleep

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#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 100 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +6 (1d4), 2 claws +6 (1d3)

**Space** 2.5 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft. (5 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (30 ft. line, DC 13, 2d6 acid)

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#### STATISTICS

**Str** 11, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 8

**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 15 (19 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Skill Focus (Stealth)

**Skills** Fly +14, Intimidate +6, Perception +9, Sense Motive +2, Stealth +21, Swim +15; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

**Languages** Draconic

**SQ** water breathing



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### SPECIAL ABILITIES

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**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

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### CREDIT

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Original stat block editor Timothy Johnson, with contributors Brett Carlos, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst



### HOARD

Though it might be the terror of the local villages or worshiped as a god by a tribe of lizardfolk, the black wyrm is not yet the target of dragonslaying heroes who carry useful bits of gear into its lair. As a result of this lack of adventurer fodder, the wyrm lacks a very important source of treasure. Nor is the wyrm yet taking on major foes to gain their favored possessions as spoils or carrying off large objects of art. Until it grows larger, most of a wyrm's hoard is a mixed bag of tribute from swamp dwellers, shiny objects taken off caravan guards or a town's watch, and objects that survived when the wyrm took a humanoid for food. Because it tends to lair underwater, the wyrm's hoard consists mainly of items that don't rot or get waterlogged.

**SLOW** (1,600 GP): key of lock jamming (APG; 400 gp), masterwork dagger with 25 gp amethyst in pommel (327 gp total), masterwork warhammer (312 gp), lacquered oaken wand of cure light wounds (4 charges; 60 gp), 3 water-washed red agates (30 gp, 25 gp, 20 gp), 424 gp, 53 sp, 330 cp.

**MEDIUM** (2,400 GP): key of lock jamming (APG; 400 gp), masterwork cold iron dagger with 25 gp amethyst in pommel (329 gp total), masterwork silver warhammer (402 gp), lacquered oaken wand of cure light wounds (30 charges; 450 gp), 3 water-washed red agates (30 gp, 25 gp, 20 gp), 720 gp, 234 sp, 60 cp.

**FAST** (3,600 GP): campfire bead (APG; 720 gp), key of lock jamming (APG; 400 gp), masterwork silver warhammer (402 gp), lacquered oaken wand of cure light wounds (42 charges; 630 gp), 3 water-washed red agates (30 gp, 25 gp, 20 gp), 1 amber with mosquito trapped inside (275 gp), 1,092 gp, 58 sp, 20 cp.

### UPPING THE ANTE

With its small size, high maneuverability, excellent senses, and ability to hide, a black wyrm can maximize its effectiveness with terrain. A large mangrove tree, with a wide base that includes many twisting roots both above and below the water, can easily contain passages through which a tiny creature can move. Small creatures must squeeze, and Medium creatures cannot enter without making successful Escape Artist checks. A black wyrm using such a root system as a base for an ambush can enjoy cover, and it might easily retreat if its prey turns out to be too tough. For most groups, an attack from such cover increases the CR of the dragon by 1.

### ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

The standard black wyrm is built for ambush, which makes sense given its small size. With both Alertness and Skill Focus (Stealth), the wyrm is in a good position to sneak up on anything it can defeat and avoid greater threats. Two more combat-oriented options are presented below.

### DREADNAUGHT

Sometimes all a dragon needs is the endurance to muscle through its foes, even if these foes get the drop on it. This simple option replaces both the wyrm's feats with Toughness.

**Changes:** hp 38 (4d12+12); Skills Perception +7, Sense Motive +0, Stealth +18; Feats Toughness (x2).

### FOCUSED DESTRUCTION

A dragon's bite and breath weapon are often its best weapons, and this build maximizes the offensive power of those two attacks, replacing its feats with Ability Focus and Weapon Focus.

**Changes:** Melee bite +7 (1d4), 2 claws +6 (1d3); Special Attacks breath weapon (30 ft. line, DC 15, 2d6 acid); Skills Perception +7, Sense Motive +0, Stealth +18; Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Weapon Focus (bite).

## BLACK DRAGON, VERY YOUNG

*The angular, horned head of this dog-sized dragon darts about quickly, looking in every direction to catch any potential threat.*

### VERY YOUNG BLACK DRAGON CR 5

XP 1,600

CE Small dragon (water)

**Init** +6; Senses dragon senses; Perception +12

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 19, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +6 natural, +1 size)

**hp** 51 (6d12+12)

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

**Immune** acid, paralysis, sleep

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 150 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +9 (1d6+3), 2 claws +9 (1d4+2)

**Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (40 ft. line, DC 15, 4d6 acid)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 15, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19 (23 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Stealth)

**Skills** Fly +13, Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +9, Perception +12, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +18, Swim +19; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

**Languages** Draconic

**SQ** swamp stride, water breathing

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

#### CREDIT

Original stat block editor Timothy Johnson, with contributors Brett Carlos, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst



## HOARD

Though still just the size of a typical dog, the very young black dragon is already discovering it can defeat foes much larger than it. In its swampy environment, it can take on Large air elementals, multiple ogres, and even the greatly feared green hag. Indeed, one reason larger black dragons don't take humanoid threats seriously is that for most of their lives, black dragons are the most dangerous thing they encounter in their own size class.

The very young black dragon might begin to assert control over an area (possibly as a minion for a more powerful swamp lord), or it might begin a journey to find a territory it can claim as it grows. Either way, it begins to be more active about treasure acquisition but is still restricted to smaller items it can move around easily.

**SLOW** (3,000 GP): campfire bead (APG; 720 gp), key of lock jamming (APG; 400 gp), masterwork warhammer (312 gp), silver and ivory wand of cure light wounds (21 charges; 315 gp), 3 water-washed red agates (30 gp, 25 gp, 20 gp), 1 amber with mosquito trapped inside (175 gp), 990 gp, 67 sp, 30 cp.

**MEDIUM** (4,650 GP): ring of arcane signets (APG; 1,000 gp), campfire bead (APG; 720 gp), key of lock jamming (APG; 400 gp), masterwork silver warhammer (402 gp), silver and ivory wand of cure light wounds (42 charges; 630



gp), 3 water-washed red agates (30 gp, 25 gp, 20 gp), 1 amber with mosquito trapped inside (275 gp), 1,140 gp, 74 sp, 60 cp.

**FAST** (6,900 GP): ring of arcane signets (APG; 1,000 gp), campfire bead (APG; 720 gp), key of lock jamming (APG; 400 gp), +1 silver warhammer (2,402 gp), silver and ivory wand of cure light wounds (42 charges; 630 gp), 3 water-washed red agates (30 gp, 25 gp, 20 gp), 1 amber with mosquito trapped inside (275 gp), 1,390 gp, 74 sp, 60 cp.

## UPPING THE ANTE

The very young black dragon is just seasoned and powerful enough to begin to gather allies, but its inability to speak anything other than Draconic works against it when trying to hire underlings or make deals. A black dragon lucky enough to find a tribe of kobolds or lizardfolk can talk them into serving it, and a squad of even CR 1/4 kobolds can buy a very young black dragon tactical flexibility.

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

A young adult black dragon is still small enough for land ambushes to be good choices, but once in the open its stealth is less likely to be useful. Below are two alternative builds that focus on maximizing the impact of an ambush by sacrificing some levels of awareness and concealment.

### FIRST STRIKE

If a foe can be dropped on the first attack, the ambush has already tilted the odds in the ambusher's favor. This build focuses on making the dragon's bite attack as dangerous as possible and increasing his ground movement in hopes of rushing from cover and knocking down a foe on the first charge attack.

**Changes:** Init +2; Speed 65 ft., fly 150 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.; Melee bite +10 (1d6+3), 2 claws +9 (1d4+2) or bite +8 (1d6+9), 2 claws +7 (1d4+4); Skills Perception +10, Sense Motive +1, Stealth +15; Feats Fleet, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite).

### SLASHER

Stealth can be useful in a swamp, but the best ambushes give the attack a line of retreat as well. This build can't be maintained easily at older categories (the black dragon's Dexterity decreases too much), but at this size the black dragon's high speed and swim speed make quick hit-and-run raids from cover (and ending in cover) an excellent way to wear down foes.

**Changes:** Init +2; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17 (+2 Dex, +1 Dodge, +6 natural, +1 size); Skills Perception +10, Sense Motive +1, Stealth +15; Feats Dodge, Mobility, Spring Attack.

## BLACK DRAGON, YOUNG

*Though the body of the heavily spiked and scaled dragon is no larger than a sizeable wolf, its black wings spread out to twice that length, as its head coils back in obvious menace.*

### YOUNG BLACK DRAGON

CR 7

XP 3,200

CE Medium dragon (water)

Init +6; Senses dragon senses; Perception +14

#### DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+2 Dex, +9 natural)

hp 76 (8d12+24)

Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7

Immune acid, paralysis, sleep

#### OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 150 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +13 (1d8+6), 2 claws +12 (1d6+4), 2 wings +7 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks breath weapon (60-ft. line, DC 17, 6d6 acid)

#### STATISTICS

Str 19, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10

Base Atk +8; CMB +12; CMD 24 (28 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Fly +13, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +11, Perception +14, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +16, Swim +23; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

Languages Draconic

SQ speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

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#### CREDIT

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Original stat block editor Charles Wright with contributors Andrew Massey, McCaul Baggett, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.

### HOARD

Now the size of a human and able to carry as much as a mule, the young black dragon has begun to build a reputation for itself and draw the attention of would-be heroes and mercenary dragonhunters. This inevitably results in some of its valuables being things brought by well-prepared foes to defeat it. As this size the dragon also begins to take larger and bulkier items to safety when it raids towns and caravans, expanding the range of spoils of war it carries off. But most of its treasure is still going to be kept underwater, making durable and waterproof treasure heavily favored.

**SLOW (5,250 GP):** ring of protection +1 (2,000 gp), +1 light steel shield with a golden scorpion device worth 250 gp on the front (1,409 gp total), masterwork silver longsword (405 gp), masterwork chain shirt with 50 gp of gold wash (450 gp total), 3 small amber pieces (50 gp, 70 gp, 80 gp), 780 gp, 600 cp.

**MEDIUM (7,800 GP):** ring of protection +1 (2,000 gp), ring of swimming (2,500 gp), pearl of power (1st-level spell; 1,000 gp), masterwork silver longsword (405 gp), mitral chain shirt (1,100 gp), 3 small amber pieces (50 gp, 70 gp, 80 gp), 524 gp, 710 sp.

**FAST (11,700 GP):** ring of arcane signets (APG; 1,000 gp), ring of protection +1 (2,000 gp), ring of swimming (2,500 gp), pearl of power (1st-level spell; 1,000 gp), +1 longsword (2,315 gp), mitral chain shirt (1,100 gp), twisted copper wand of cure moderate wounds (5 charges; 450 gp), 3 small amber pieces (50 gp, 70 gp, 80 gp), 1,044 gp, 900 sp, 100 cp.

### UPPING THE ANTE

Gaining the ability to speak to reptiles, and growing an entire size category, greatly expands the allies the young black dragon can call on, while at the same time reducing its benefits from moving in and out of tight cover. Since the dragon likely hasn't had time to add a long list of reptilian allies, we'll focus on what terrain now serves it best.

Where the dragon can now excel is open bodies of water, especially the murky water of its favored swamps. A black dragon's scent works underwater thanks to its water breathing ability, allowing it to maneuver and target in liquid so murky no darkvision or light source can function. Coupled with its swim rate, and a Medium size that still





allows it to easily use rivers and mid-sized pools for transportation, the young black dragon should fight in, or at least near, the darkest, dankest swamp water it can find. If the dragon truly tricks or force PCs into engaging with it in such an environment, the encounter easily gains 1–2 points of CR.

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

Already able to take on foes many times its size, by the young stage the black dragon has begun to travel enough to realize that many things are tougher than it, ranging from powerful undead to outsiders and well-trained, well-equipped humanoids. Although some dragons take this as a challenge to get tougher fast, others see it as an opportunity to begin diplomacy.

## DREADNAUGHT

If the “tough it out” theory works for a wyrmling, it’ll eventually grow up to add some offensive to its defense.

**Changes:** Init +2; hp 100 (8d12+24+24); Skills Fly +13, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +11, Perception +12, Sense Motive +1, Stealth +13, Swim +23; Feats Toughness ({{ts}}3), Weapon Focus (bite).

## DRAGON VASSAL

One way to survive to become a great wyrm someday is to make allies, and the earliest allies a black dragon is likely to find are older dragons already controlling territory. Being a “dragon vassal” might not be as glamorous as taking over a new swamp, but it does give the young dragon someone to call on if real trouble rolls in. It also, however, requires good social skills.

**Changes:** Init +2; Feats Alertness, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Diplomacy +13, Fly +12, Intimidate +13, Linguistics +8, Perception +14, Sense Motive +14, Stealth +10, Swim +11; Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc, Undercommon.

## BLACK DRAGON, JUVENILE

*Acid mist bubbles from the sharp jaw of this spiky, dark dragon as its thick chest heaves in growls and its wolf-sized body tenses, ready to breathe a cloud of corrosion.*

### JUVENILE BLACK DRAGON CR 8

XP 4,800

CE Medium dragon (water)

Init +6; Senses dragon senses; Perception +19

#### DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22 (+2 Dex, +12 natural)

hp 105 (10d12+40)

Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +9

Immune acid, paralysis, sleep

#### OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 150 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +16 (1d8+7), 2 claws +15 (1d6+5), 2 wings +10 (1d4+2)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (60 ft. line, DC 20, 8d6 acid)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th, concentration +11)

At will—*darkness* (40 ft. radius)

#### STATISTICS

Str 21, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 12

Base Atk +10; CMB +15; CMD 27 (31 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Fly +15, Handle Animal +11, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Perception +19, Sense Motive +4, Stealth +21, Swim +26; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

Languages Common, Draconic

SQ speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

#### CREDIT

Original stat block editor Timothy Johnson, with contributors Vladimir Presnyak, Brett Carlos, and John Reyst.

## HOARD

The juvenile black dragon begins to feel the weight of its long lifespan, and it considers long-term plans that might take centuries to unfold. Whatever its place in the world, the juvenile has a growing sense that it wants more, and it must be ready to claim any opportunity that comes along. Its treasure is pared down to its favored items, kept small to be easily defended and easily moved.

**SLOW (6,600 GP):** +1 silver battleaxe (2,400 gp), amulet of natural armor +1 (2,000 gp), +1 breastplate (1,500 gp), gold and bone wand of cure moderate wounds (5 charges; 450 gp), 240 gp, 98 sp, 20 cp.

**MEDIUM (10,050 GP):** ring of sustenance (2,500 gp), +1 silver battleaxe (2,400 gp), amulet of natural armor +1 (2,000 gp), +1 breastplate (1,500 gp), gold and bone wand of cure moderate wounds (10 charges; 900 gp), 50 pp, 240 gp, 98 sp, 20 cp.

**FAST (15,000 GP):** ring of sustenance (2,500 gp), +1 silver battleaxe (2,400 gp), amulet of natural armor +1 (2,000 gp), ring of protection +1 (2,000 gp), +2 breastplate (4,500 gp), gold and bone wand of cure moderate wounds (10 charges; 900 gp), 45 pp, 240 gp, 98 sp, 20 cp.

## UPPING THE ANTE

Though no larger than it was when “young,” the juvenile black dragon has grown into its frame. It is stronger, tougher, and considerably more talented. Its first magic talent has appeared in the form of darkness at will, and it has communicated with reptiles for years. It’s worth remembering that this dragon

is a “juvenile” only in terms of its own vast lifespan. It has lived as long as a fully adult human, and it has learned just as much in that time.

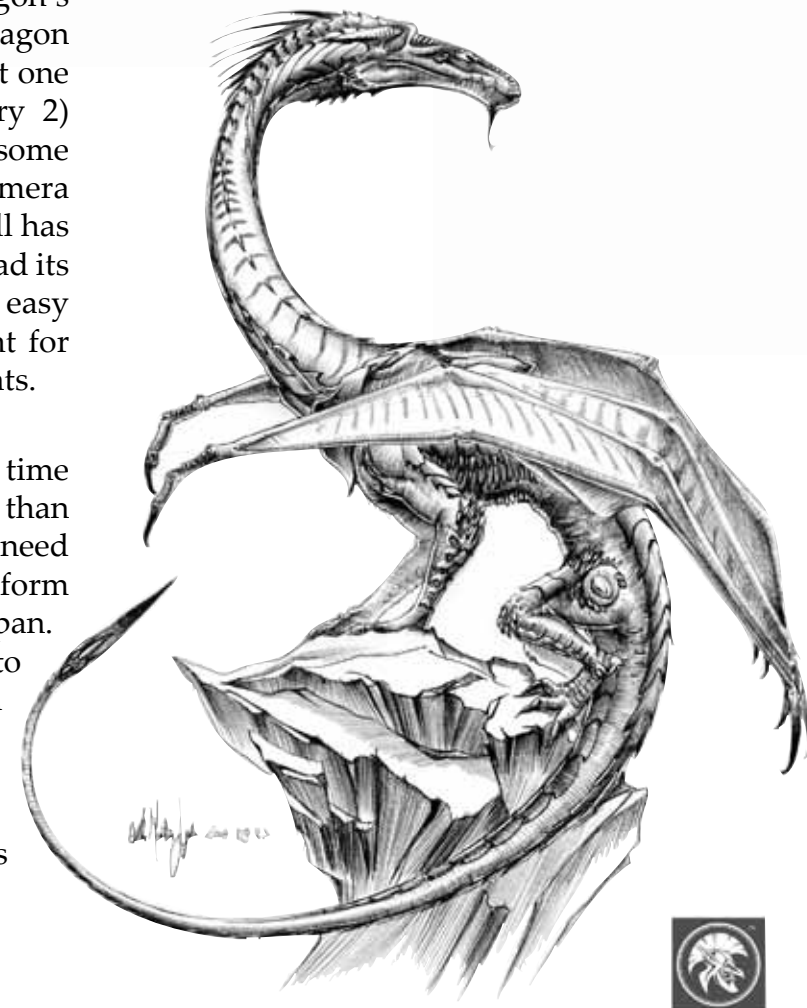
At this point, the dragon is very likely to have one or more subordinates, who might be animals he has trained, or smarter allies with an affinity for dragons but not as much power as a 25-year-old true dragon. Snakes of all kinds are common, as are crocodiles, especially near one of the dragon’s underwater lairs. A cunning black dragon of this age is also likely to have at least one dragonlike ally, with drakes, (Bestiary 2) and wyverns most common, though some black dragons forge alliances with chimera at about this age. A juvenile dragon still has a reputation to build, so it is likely to lead its allies into any serious battle, making it easy to adjust any encounter CR to account for the additional threat of more combatants.

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

A juvenile black dragon has more time to spend getting familiar to its size than any younger dragon, finding that the need to bulk up from its slim hatchling form slows the growth of its total wingspan. Although most black dragons look to train in a broad range of skills from a young age, some focus on specific combat techniques, and by this age their differentiation of ideas begins to strongly show in their choice of lairs and tactics.

## CASTER KILLER

With additional experience, the juvenile black dragon has begun to realize one of the most dangerous forces it can face is a group of humanoids that includes a spellcaster. Arcane casters can attack the mind of the dragon, bypassing its armored hide. Divine casters can heal foes before the dragon finishes them off. Some dragons develop into dedicated caster-killers, focusing on a





powerful bite with the Cleave feat, which allows them to attack both a spellcaster and an adjacent defender as a standard action, retaining mobility to get at casters “in the back.” Iron Will helps stave off spells that might confuse or even control the juvenile black dragon, who does not yet enjoy the protection of SR.

**Changes:** Init +2; Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +11; Melee bite +16 (2d6+7), 2 claws +15 (1d6+5), 2 wings +10 (1d4+2); Feats Cleave, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Fly +15, Handle Animal +11, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Perception +15, Sense Motive +2, Stealth +15, Swim +26.

#### DEATH SHADOW

Though a juvenile black dragon no longer has a size bonus to Stealth, not every black dragon accepts the reduced ability to sneak around. Some focus, even from a young age, on maximizing stealth and toughening their hides to survive taking an attack of opportunity or two if they need to make a dash back to cover.

**Changes:** Init +2; AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 24 (+2 Dex, +14 natural); Melee bite +15 (2d6+7), 2 claws +15 (1d6+5), 2 wings +10 (1d4+2); Feats Improved Natural Armor {{x2}}, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Skill Focus (Stealth), Stealthy; Skills Escape Artist +4; Fly +15, Handle Animal +11, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Perception +15, Sense Motive +2, Stealth +25, Swim +26.

## BLACK DRAGON, YOUNG ADULT

*A row of spikes runs the length of the dark-scaled dragon, from the edges of its broad wings along its spine, to the tips of its languidly moving tail.*

### YOUNG ADULT BLK DRAGON CR10

XP 9,600

CE Large dragon (water)

Init +5; Senses dragon senses; Perception +21

#### DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 24 (+1 Dex, +15 natural, –1 size)

hp 126 (12d12+48)

Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +10

DR 5/magic; Immune acid, paralysis, sleep; SR 21

#### OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +18 (2d6+9), 2 claws +17 (1d8+6), 2 wings +11 (1d6+3), tail slap +11 (1d8+9)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (80-ft. line, DC 21, 10d6 acid)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

At will—*darkness* (50-ft. radius)

Spells Known (CL 1st)

1st (4/day)—*alarm*, *obscuring mist*

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *mending*, *message*, *read magic*

#### STATISTICS

Str 23, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 12

Base Atk +12; CMB +19; CMD 30 (34 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Fly +10, Handle Animal +13, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Perception +21,

Stealth +18, Swim +29; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

Languages Common, Draconic

SQ speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

#### CREDIT

Original stat block editor Timothy Johnson, with contributors Andrew Massey, Brett Carlos, Charles Wright, Maugan22 G, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.

## HOARD

As the young adult black dragon grows to Large size, it finds it can claim a larger lair and defend it from most potential thieves. While it thought of most of its previous lairs as “temporary,” it now finds a place it expects to stay in for decades, and possibly just expand as its need expand. Its hoard shows this settling-in attitude, with a smattering of random, moderate magic items and larger numbers of low-value coins.

**SLOW (10,950 GP):** +1 morningstar (2,308 gp), +2 heavy steel shield (4,320 gp), mithral chain shirt (1,100 gp), quartz wand of scorching ray (25 charges; 2,250 gp), 800 gp, 1,600 sp, 1,200 cp.

**MEDIUM (16,350 GP):** adamantine morningstar (3,008 gp), +1 falchion (2,375 gp), +2 heavy steel shield (4,320 gp), +1 mithral chain shirt (2,100 gp), quartz wand of scorching ray (25 charges; 2,250 gp), pearl-handled steel wand of blink (5 charges; 1,125 gp), 1,140 gp, 220 sp, 1,000 cp.

**FAST (24,600 GP):** +1 adamantine morningstar (5,008 gp), +1 falchion (2,375 gp), +1 heavy steel shield (1,320 gp), +2 mithral chain shirt (5,100 gp), pearl-handled steel wand of blink (20 charges; 4,500 gp), golembane scarab (2,500 gp), 3,600 gp, 1,900 sp, 700 cp.

## UPPING THE ANTE

Reaching the first stage of real draconic maturity, the young adult black dragon finds its growing intellect allows it to speak the common tongue. Suddenly, the dragon can make demands of local towns, hire mercenaries, and negotiate buy-offs with intelligent creatures more powerful than itself. This is often a time of kingdom-building for black dragons, and many hire or take the oaths of fealty of humanoid underlings. Many develop a group of 4–6 experts, possibly including a highwayman, slayer (CR 8), torturer, guide,

conjurist, sellsword, fortune teller, priest, or shaman (use the pregenerated NPCs in the GameMastery Guide for such underlings).

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

Now that they take penalties to Stealth checks, black dragons frequently give up on depending on ambushes by the age of young adult, since it works only in extremely favorable conditions (which can't always be arranged). Although most black dragons take this as a lesson encouraging a broad range of talents and options, a few who sought other avenues early on only now begin to see real dividends from their early focus.

### ARCANIST

The young adult stage is the earliest a black dragon can realistically start considering focusing on its arcane powers, and some plan for the moment for the decades leading up to this. Although a young adult black dragon has only a few spells and just one spell-like ability that's offensively useful (darkness), it can use it to amazing effect if it has focused most of its feats to doing so. The combination of obscuring mist with swift darkness makes it very difficult for foes to target the dragon, while its own scent ability coupled with Blind-Fighting and the occasional true strike allows it to overcome much of the drawback of total magic darkness.

**Changes:** Spells Known (CL 1st); 1st (4/day)—obscuring mist, true strike; 0 (at will)—detect magic, mending, message, read magic; Feats Alertness, Blind-Fighting, Improved Initiative, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (darkness), Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Fly +10, Handle





Animal +13, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Perception +27, Sense Motive +2, Stealth +12, Swim +29; Racial +8 Swim.

## JUGGERNAUT

Rather than seek a well-rounded set of talents, many black dragons desire to deal as much damage as fast as possible, with no concern for anything but offensive power. They look at how much they can dish out with breath weapons and full-attack routines, with less focus on Stealth, Perception, and bite attacks alone. Once these dragons reach Large size, they become true terrors when they do attack a foe.

**Changes:** Init +1; Melee bite +18 (3d6+9), 2 claws +18 (2d6+6), 2 wings +11 (1d6+3), tail slap +11 (1d8+9); Special Attacks breath weapon (80-ft. line, DC 23, 10d6 acid); Feats Ability Focus (breath weapon), Improved Natural Weapon (bite), Improved Natural Weapon (claws), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (claws); Skills Fly +10, Handle Animal +13, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Perception +17, Sense Motive +2, Stealth +12, Swim +29.

## BLACK DRAGON, ADULT

*Larger than a horse, the dark-scaled dragon flexes its muscles and bares a set of razor-sharp fangs.*

**ADULT BLACK DRAGON** **CR11**

XP 12,800

CE Large dragon (water)

**Init** +5; Senses dragon senses; Perception +24

**Aura** frightful presence (180 ft., DC 19)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 28, touch 10, flat-footed 27 (+1 Dex, +18 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 161 (14d12+70)

**Fort** +14, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12

**DR** 5/magic; **Immune** acid, paralysis, sleep;  
**SR** 22

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +21 (2d6+10), 2 claws +20 (1d8+7), 2 wings +15 (1d6+3), tail +15 (1d8+10)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (80-ft. line, DC 22, 12d6 acid), corrupt water

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 14th)

At will—*darkness* (60-ft. radius)

**Spells Known** (CL 3rd)

1st (6/day)—*alarm, mage armor, obscuring mist*  
0 (at will)—*dancing lights, detect magic, mending, message, read magic*

### STATISTICS

**Str** 25, **Dex** 12, **Con** 21, **Int** 14, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +14; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 33 (37 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Fly +12, Handle Animal +16, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Perception +24, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +20, Swim +32; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant

**SQ** speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Corrupt Water (Sp):** Once per day the dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 19) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 feet.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** This special quality makes the dragon's very presence unsettling to foes. Activating this ability is a free action that is part of an attack or charge. Opponents within range (180 feet) who witness the action might become frightened or shaken for 5d6 rounds. This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the dragon. An opponent can resist the effects with a successful Will saving throw (DC 19). On a failed saving throw, the opponent is shaken, or panicked if it has 4 Hit Dice or fewer. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

### CREDIT

Original stat block editor Charles Wright, with contributors Andrew Massey, Blake Reitz, McCaul Baggett, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.



## HOARD

A fully adult black dragon is a local legend, and its sphere of influence has spread, causing myths about its hoard to grow. More of its treasure comes from the foes it has defeated, and some of those items are kept as much for sentimental value as the dragon's pure greed. Though it can guard its hoard well and it has likely settled into the same lair for decades (if not centuries), the adult black dragon's awareness of the larger world around it grows. It could start to fear that truly powerful beings might notice it, causing it to wish to keep its hoard small and focused on easily portable items.

**SLOW** (13,950 GP): ring of swimming (2,500), +1 greataxe (2,320 gp), +2 heavy steel shield (4,320 gp), +1 mithral chain shirt (2,100 gp), quartz wand of scorching ray (20 charges; 1,800 gp), 738 gp, 1,600 sp, 1,200 cp.

**MEDIUM** (21,000 GP): +1 adamantite greataxe (5,020 gp), lesser extend metamagic rod (3,000 gp), +1 falchion (2,375 gp), +2 heavy steel shield (4,320 gp), +1 mithral chain shirt (2,100 gp), pearl-handled steel wand of blink (15 charges; 3,375 gp), 778 gp, 220 sp, 1,000 cp.

**FAST** (31,500 GP): ring of force shield (8,500 gp), +1 adamantite greataxe (5,020 gp), +1 falchion (2,375 gp), +1 heavy steel shield (1,320 gp), +2 mithral chain shirt (5,100 gp), pearl-handled steel wand of blink (20 charges; 4,500 gp), 4,488 gp, 1,900 sp, 700 cp.

## UPPING THE ANTE

A Large dragon has difficulty hiding anywhere, and it might not be able to use the waterways and pools of its home marsh to lay ambush to foes (though certainly its lair will be located somewhere with enough room for it to maneuver in murky water when defending its home). However, by now the reach of the dragon's breath weapon, and its ability to fly 200 feet in a move action, allows it to strafe foes from the air while remaining out of reach of all but their archers and longest-range spells. A black dragon wishing to ambush foes need not attack from underbrush or dank water, but can instead strike from above. A dragon that knows its swamp well knows of several places where trees form thick canopies of leaves that block visibility, but do not provide cover. When intruders are detected (or reported by swamp denizens), the dragon can wait until they enter such an area, then fly overhead, unseen, until it can breathe down on the weakest-looking opponent.

Even if more direct confrontation is required later, such an initial attack can force foes to waste resources and allow the dragon to gauge which opponents have effective ranged attacks.

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

As an adult, a black dragon is a force to be reckoned with no matter what path its tactics has taken it. Many of the foes it faces will be prepared to face a dragon and believe



they know its strategy, abilities, and physical limits. Some black dragons intentionally fight in unusual styles, to take such “well-prepared” opponents by surprise.

### DREADNAUGHT

An adult black dragon might not have much magic, but if it can maximize its arcane powers to augment its natural trends, it can be a devastating edge of extra power. Even a black dragon that prefers simple toughness can get great use out of magic, as the dreadnaught build below shows. In addition to focusing on physical toughness, the adult black dragon has learned the importance of a strong mind as well. For simplicity, the build includes the values for mage armor and shield in the stat block changes. The dragon isn’t likely to bother with protection from good unless it faces a paladin or similarly obvious champion of good.

**Changes:** Init +1; AC 37, touch 10, flat-footed 36 (+1 Dex, +19 natural, +4 mage armor, +4 shield, –1 size); hp 203 (14d12+70+42); Fort +14, Ref +10, Will +14; Spells Known (CL 3rd); 1st (6/day –2 cast)—mage armor, protection from good, shield; 0 (at will)—dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, read magic, resistance; Feats Endurance {{\${s}}3, Improved Iron Will, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Fly +12, Handle Animal +16, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Perception +20, Sense Motive +3, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +14, Swim +32.

### REAYER

Fewer single foes can threaten a dragon as it ages, and many begin to focus not on dealing damage to single foes, but on controlling an area of the battlefield and learning to reach and harm as many foes as possible at once. If this requires it to stand among foes and take their hits, it can use Combat Expertise to make combat flow more in its favor while doing so, and Lunge keeps foes in range long after they feel they’ve moved safely away.

**Changes:** Init +1; AC 29, touch 10, flat-footed 28 (+1 Dex, +19 natural, –1 size); Feats Alertness, Cleave, Combat Expertise, Improved Natural Armor, Lunge, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Fly +12, Handle Animal +16, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Perception +24, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +19, Stealth +14, Swim +32.



## BLACK DRAGON, MATURE ADULT

*A hulking black body the size of a rhinoceros supports a long, serpentine neck, topped with a horned head that looks at you in obvious disdain.*

### MATURE ADULT BLK DRAGON CR12

**XP** 19,200

**CE** Large dragon (water)

**Init** +5; Senses dragon senses; Perception +26

**Aura** frightful presence (210 ft., DC 20)

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 31, touch 10, flat-footed 30 (+1 Dex, +21 natural, –1 size)

**hp** 184 (16d12+80)

**Fort** +15, **Ref** +11, **Will** +13

**DR** 10/magic; **Immune** acid, paralysis, sleep, SR 23

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +24 (2d6+12), 2 claws +23 (1d8+8), 2 wings +18 (1d6+4), tail slap +18 (1d8+12)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (80 ft. line, DC 23, 14d6 acid), corrupt water

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th, concentration +18)

At will—*darkness* (70-ft. radius)

**Spells Known** (CL 5th, concentration +7)

2nd (5/day)—*blur*, *summon swarm*

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 27, **Dex** 12, **Con** 21, **Int** 14, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 14

**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +25; **CMD** 36 (40 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Fly +14, Handle Animal +18, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Perception +26, Spellcraft +21, Stealth +22, Swim +35; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim  
**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant  
**SQ** speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Corrupt Water (Sp):** Once per day the dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 19) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 feet.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** This special quality makes the dragon's very presence unsettling to foes. Activating this ability is a free action that is part of an attack or charge. Opponents within range (210 feet) who witness the action might become frightened or shaken for 5d6 rounds. This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the dragon. An opponent can resist the effects with a successful Will saving throw (DC 20). On a failed saving throw, the opponent is shaken, or panicked if it has 4 Hit Dice or fewer. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

#### CREDIT

Original stat block contributors Brett Carlos, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.

#### HOARD

A mature adult black dragon might have claimed the same section of land for over a century, allowing it to build a considerable collection of coins and art objects.

**SLOW (18,000 GP):** +1 adamantite greatsword (5,050 gp), +2 heavy steel shield (4,320 gp), +1 mithral chain shirt (2,100 gp), pearl-handled steel wand of blink (15 charges; 3,375 gp), 5-foot tall copper candlesticks (two; 100 gp each), uncut emerald (100 gp), silver ring with onyx dragon signet (50 gp), bone mug banded in pewter (25 gp), 748 gp, 20,310 sp, 100 cp.

**MEDIUM (27,000 GP):** +1 adamantite greatsword (5,050 gp), lesser extend metamagic rod (3,000 gp), bead of force (3,000 gp), +2 heavy steel shield (4,320 gp), +2 mithral chain shirt (5,100 gp), copper and opal wand of cure serious wounds (15 charges; 3,375 gp), 7-foot marble statue of a succubus and a black dragon entwined (625 gp), solid amber shotglass (300 gp), mother-of-pearl eyepatch (250 gp), silver-plated portable ram (200 gp), 648 gp, 11,220 sp, 1,000 cp.

**FAST (40,500 GP):** minor ring of energy resistance (acid) (12,000 gp), +1 adamantite greataxe (5,020 gp), +1 heavy steel light fortification shield (4,320 gp), +2 mithral chain shirt (5,100 gp), ring of counterspells (4,000 gp), copper and opal wand of cure serious wounds (20 charges; 4,500 gp), adamantite spiked crown (1,000 gp), 5-foot silver mirror (500 gp),





mithral wine amphora (350 gp), electrum-plated orc skull (200 gp), 20 obsidian orbs (20 gp each), ivory thimble (25 gp), seven yards gold thread (24 gp), 864 gp, 21,900 sp, 700 cp.

## UPPING THE ANTE

Although the mystic powers of a mature adult black dragon might not seem impressive compared to that of a wizard of the same CR, the arcane knowledge the dragon possesses is actually considerable. As the dragon's reputation expands, so does the interest of people of power desiring to learn from a full-blooded dragon. At this age the black dragon might well have a trusted ally that is a chieftain, guild master, celebrity bard, or even a queen (use the pregenerated NPCs in the GameMastery Guide for such allies).

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

As a black dragon's influence, experience, and magic continue to expand, so do the possible number of roads its development might take it.

### DEATH SHADOW

As black dragons age, most accept that their youthful tactics of ambush and stealth must be limited to specific situations where marsh lakes or foggy skies can conceal their bulk. But as the dragon's magic grows, it begins to offer arcane alternatives to the petite size of youth. Dragons who do not wish to give up the ambush tactics find that additional training, coupled with invisibility and flight, can once again allow them to be upon foes before any alarm is raised,

and cat's grace can restore their adolescent agility.

**Changes:** Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Stealthy, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Fly +14, Handle Animal +18, Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Perception +26, Spellcraft +21, Stealth +26, Swim +35; Spells Known (CL 5th, concentration +7); 2nd (5/day)—cat's grace, invisibility.

### DRAGON LORD

The more terrain a dragon holds, and the more underlings it deals with, the more it needs social skills to deal with its budding empire. For a dragon lord, direct combat with its enemies represents a failure of its underlings.

**Changes:** Init +1; Feats Alertness, Dazzling Display, Intimidating Prowess, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Intimidate), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Diplomacy +28, Fly +14, Intimidate +39, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Perception +26, Sense Motive +28, Spellcraft +21, Stealth +10, Swim +25.

## BLACK DRAGON, OLD

*Hissing acid drips from the fanged maw of this massive, black-scaled, horned dragon.*

### OLD BLACK DRAGON

CR 14

XP 38,400

CE Huge dragon (water)

**Init** +4; Senses dragon senses; Perception +29

**Aura** frightful presence (240 ft., DC 22)

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 32, touch 8, flat-footed 32 (+24 natural, -2 size)  
**hp** 225 (18d12+108)

**Fort** +17, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15

**DR** 10/magic; **Immune** acid, paralysis, sleep, SR 25

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** Bite +26 (2d8+13 plus 2d6 acid), 2 claws +25 (2d6+9), 2 wings +23 (1d8+4), tail +23 (2d6+13)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** acidic bite, breath weapon (100-ft. line, DC 25, 16d6 acid), corrupt water, crush (2d8+13)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 18th)

At will—*darkness* (80-ft. radius), plant growth

**Spells Known** (CL 7th)

3rd (5/day)—*dispel magic*, *heroism*

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *summon swarm*

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 29, **Dex** 10, **Con** 23, **Int** 16, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +18; **CMB** +29; **CMD** 39 (43 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power

Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Fly +13, Handle Animal +21, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (history) +24, Perception +29, Spellcraft +24, Stealth +20, Swim +38; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Orc

**SQ** speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

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#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

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**Acidic Bite (Su):** The dragon's bite deals an additional 2d6 points of acid damage.

**Corrupt Water (Sp):** Once per day the dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 19) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 feet.

**Crush (Ex):** If flying or jumping, the dragon can land on foes as a standard action, using its whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against opponents three or more size categories smaller than the dragon. A crush attack affects as many creatures as fit in the dragon's space. Creatures in the affected area must succeed on a Reflex saving throw (DC 25—equal to that of the dragon's breath weapon) or be pinned, automatically taking bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, it must succeed at a combat maneuver check as normal. Pinned foes take damage from the crush each round if they don't escape. A crush attack deals the indicated damage plus 1–1/2 times the dragon's Strength bonus.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** This special quality makes the dragon's very presence unsettling to foes. Activating this ability is a free action that is part of an attack or charge. Opponents within range (240 feet) who witness the action might become frightened or shaken for 5d6 rounds. This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the dragon. An opponent can resist the effects with a successful Will saving throw (DC 22). On a failed saving throw, the opponent is shaken, or panicked if it has 4 Hit Dice or fewer. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

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#### CREDIT

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Original stat block editor Timothy Johnson, with contributors Andrew Massey, Brett Carlos, Charles Wright, Maugan22 G, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.

#### HOARD

The hoard of an old black dragon is truly impressive, often laced with items dating back to its youth, valuables taken off failed dragonhunters, and tribute offered by nearby communities. While perfectly able

to protect his hoard, old black dragons are often suspicious of everyone and everything, and they might have pared down their possessions to just items they can fit in their most secure lair.

**SLOW** (30,000 GP): +1 adamantine greatsword (5,050 gp), lesser extend metamagic rod (3,000 gp), bead of force (3,000 gp), +2 heavy steel shield (4,320 gp), +2 mithral chain shirt (5,100 gp), copper and opal wand of cure serious wounds (15 charges; 3,375 gp), 7-foot marble statue of a succubus and a black dragon entwined (625 gp), solid amber shotglass (300 gp), mother-of-pearl eyepatch (250 gp), silver-plated portable ram (200 gp), 3,648 gp, 11,220 sp, 1,000 cp.

**MEDIUM** (45,000 GP): minor ring of energy resistance (acid) (12,000 gp), +1 adamantine greataxe (5,020 gp), +1 heavy steel light fortification shield (4,320 gp), +2 mithral chain shirt (5,100 gp), ring of counterspells (4,000 gp), copper and opal wand of cure serious wounds (20 charges; 4,500 gp), adamantine spiked crown (1,000 gp), 5-foot silver mirror (500 gp), mithral wine amphora (350 gp), electrum-plated orc skull (200 gp), 20 obsidian orbs (20 gp each), ivory thimble (25 gp), seven yards gold thread (24 gp), 5,364 gp, 21,900 sp, 700 cp.

**FAST** (66,500 GP): bronze staff of fire with gold dragon motif (18,950), mithral chain belt of incredible Dexterity +4 (16,000), glove of storing with intricate ceramic beadwork (10,000 gp), pale blue



rhomboid ioun stone (+2 enhancement to Strength; 8,000 gp), ever-smoking bottle (5,400 gp), silver and aquamarine necklace (500 gp), waterproof iron chest (4 cubic feet, hardness 10, 100 hp, 100 lbs.; 300 gp), rare peppers and flavored salts (in chest, 10 lb.; 1,000 gp), gray ivory cat statue (340 gp), gold scepter with empty gem sockets (500 gp), 5,000 gp, 10,000 sp, 1,000 cp.



## UPPING THE ANTE

The paranoia that sets in with many old dragons leads some to wear more of their treasure. Certainly a dragon can use metamagic rods when casting its spells, fling ioun stones into orbit, or squeeze a ring or two onto its head-horns. If you want to add even more power to your dragon, considering ditching all the listed armor and weapons to give the dragon more ioun stones, creating an obvious (and augmenting) crown flying around its huge skull.

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

Old black dragons often think of themselves as being at the top of the food chain, and therefore they feel they are the targets of assassination plots, thieves' guilds, dragonblood-drinking cults, and entire orders of paladins. And, of course, sometimes the dragons are right. Regardless of their tactics, old dragons spend considerable time planning how to deal with the inevitable invasion of their sanctums.

## SAGE

Rather than readying to face any threat that comes along, this dragon seeks to learn of any threat before it becomes a serious danger.

**Changes:** Spells Known (CL 7th); 3rd (5/day)—arcane sight, clairsight/clairvoyance; 2nd (7/day)—detect thoughts, locate object, see invisibility; 1st (7/day)—alarm, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, identify, mage armor; 0 (at will)—dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, mending, message, prestidigitation, read magic; Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Fly +13, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (local) +24, Perception +35, Sense Motive +32, Spellcraft +24, Stealth +20, Swim +38.

## SWORDBREAKER

This black dragon knows its most dangerous foes are well-equipped humanoids and their toys. With powerful Sunder options, it hits adventurers where it hurts—their weapons, wands, staves, and shields.

**Changes:** Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Greater Sunder, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (bite)



## BLACK DRAGON, VERY OLD

*Hissing green acid runs over the jaw and down the long neck of this massive, black-scaled dragon.*

**VERY OLD BLACK DRAGON** **CR 15**

**XP** 51,200

**CE** Huge dragon (water)

**Init** +4; Senses dragon senses; Perception +31

**Aura** frightful presence (270 ft., DC 23)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 35, touch 8, flat-footed 35 (+27 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 250 (20d12+120)

**Fort** +18, **Ref** +12, **Will** +16

**DR** 15/magic; **Immune** acid, paralysis, sleep, SR 26

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +29 (2d8+15 plus 2d6 acid), 2 claws +28 (2d6+10), 2 wings +26 (1d8+5), tail slap +26 (2d6+15)

**Space** 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** acidic bite, breath weapon (100-ft. line, DC 26, 18d6 acid), corrupt water, crush (DC 26, 2d8+15)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 20th, concentration +23)

At will—*darkness* (90-ft. radius), plant growth

**Spells Known** (CL 9th, concentration +12)

4th (4/day)—*black tentacles*, *dimension door*

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *heroism*, *hold person*

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *glitterdust* (DC 15), *invisibility*, *summon swarm*

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect I*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *I magic*

### STATISTICS

**Str** 31, **Dex** 10, **Con** 23, **Int** 16, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +20; **CMB** +32; **CMD** 42 (46 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Combat Expertise, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike,

Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Fly +15, Handle Animal +23, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (history) +26, Perception +31, Spellcraft +26, Stealth +21, Swim +41; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim  
**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Orc  
**SQ** speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Acidic Bite (Su):** The dragon's bite deals an additional 2d6 points of acid damage.

**Corrupt Water (Sp):** Once per day the dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 19) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 feet.

**Crush (Ex):** If flying or jumping, the dragon can land on foes as a standard action, using its whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against opponents three or more size categories smaller than the dragon. A crush attack affects as many creatures as fit in the dragon's space. Creatures in the affected area must succeed on a Reflex saving throw (DC 25—equal to that of the dragon's breath weapon) or be pinned, automatically taking bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, it must succeed at a

combat maneuver check as normal. Pinned foes take damage from the crush each round if they don't escape. A crush attack deals the indicated damage plus 1-1/2 times the dragon's Strength bonus.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** This special quality makes the dragon's very presence unsettling to foes. Activating this ability is a free action that is part of an attack or charge. Opponents within range (270 feet) who witness the action might become frightened or shaken for 5d6 rounds. This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the dragon. An opponent can resist the effects with a successful Will saving throw (DC 23). On a failed saving throw, the opponent is shaken, or panicked if it has 4 Hit Dice or





fewer. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

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#### CREDIT

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Original stat block editor Timothy Johnson, with contributors Brett Carlos, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.

### HOARD

The contents of a very old dragon's hoard can change more than at any other age category. During the paranoia of its old age category, the dragon rids itself of many innocent items it fears were cursed, bad luck, or part of intricate plans to destroy it. While it might seek out some of those objects in its later years, for now the very old black dragon has calmed itself and is content to enjoy the prestige of a few, new, valued items that strike envy into its rivals.

**SLOW** (39,000 GP): ring of invisibility (20,000 gp), +1 spell storing dagger (8,302 gp), 10,698 gp.

**MEDIUM** (58,500 GP): +2 bane (vs. dragons) cold iron halberd (20,320), ring of invisibility (20,000 gp), +1 spell storing dagger (8,302 gp), 9,878 gp.

**FAST** (87,000 GP): rod of thunder and lightning (33,000 gp), +2 bane (vs. dragons) cold iron halberd (20,320), ring of invisibility (20,000 gp), +1 spell storing dagger (8,302 gp), 5,378 gp.

### UPPING THE ANTE

Put a ring of invisibility on a very old black dragon. Watch the fun.

### ALTERNATIVE BUILD

By the time they are very old, black dragons have grown quite sure of themselves and their understanding of the way the world works. They grow bored with the lesser races, finding interactions with them dull and predictable. Oddly, this often makes them more likely to converse with the creatures that show temerity enough to confront them—either to prove to these upstarts that a black dragon is superior in mind as well as body or to seek out the rare scraps of newly unearthed information, entertaining riddles, or snippets of forgotten history.

### DRACONTEUR

This dragon is bored—bored with its surroundings, bored with crushing the insectlike creatures that try to

steal its hoard, and bored with life itself. When it gets the opportunity, it engages its enemies in conversation or, better yet, battles of wit such as riddle contests and trivia games.

**Changes:** Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Persuasive, Skill focus (Know: geography, Know: history, Know: local, Know: nobility), Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Bluff +16, Diplomacy +20, Fly +5, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (geography) +22, Knowledge (history) +22, Knowledge (local) +22, Knowledge (nobility) +22, Knowledge (religion) +16, Linguistics +16, Perception +21, Sense Motive +21, Spellcraft +16, Swim +31; Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Aquan, Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant, Gnome, Gnoll, Goblin, Orc, Sylvan, Terran, Undercommon.



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## BLACK DRAGON, ANCIENT

Long spikes and ragged scales complete cover this massive, dark dragon. The strong smell of acrid decay surrounds the air around it, and gathers on the ground around its feet as a caustic haze.

### ANCIENT BLACK DRAGON

CR 16

XP 76,800

CE Huge dragon (water)

Init +4; Senses dragon senses; Perception +34

Aura frightful presence (300 ft., DC 25)

#### DEFENSE

AC 38, touch 8, flat-footed 38 (+30 natural, -2 size)

hp 297 (22d12+154)

Fort +20, Ref +13, Will +18

DR 15/magic; Immune acid, paralysis, sleep, SR 27

#### OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +32 (2d8+16 plus 4d6 acid), 2 claws +31 (2d6+11), 2 wings +29 (1d8+5), tail +29 (2d6+16)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks acid pool (50-ft. radius), acidic bite, breath weapon (100-ft. line, DC 28, 20d6 acid), corrupt water, crush

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 22nd)

At will—darkness (100-ft. radius), insect plague, plant growth

Spells Known (CL 11th)

5th (4/day)—cone of cold (DC 19), wall of force

4th (7/day)—arcane eye, black tentacles, dimension door

3rd (7/day)—dispel magic, heroism, hold person (DC 17), slow (DC 17)

2nd (7/day)—blur, glitterdust (DC 16), invisibility, summon swarm, whispering wind

1st (7/day)—alarm, mage armor, magic missile, obscuring mist, true strike

0 (at will)—dancing lights, detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance

#### STATISTICS

Str 33, Dex 10, Con 25, Int 18, Wis 21, Cha 18

Base Atk +22; CMB +35; CMD 45 (49 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Flyby Attack, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Fly +17, Handle Animal +26, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (geography) +29, Knowledge (history) +29, Perception +34, Spellcraft +29, Stealth +23, Swim +44; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc

SQ speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Acid Pool (Su):** The dragon can use its breath weapon to create an acid pool as a standard action. This acid pool has a radius of 50 feet. When an acid pool is created, anyone inside its area takes 20d6 points of acid damage (Reflex half). Any creature that starts its turn touching this pool takes damage, but can make a Reflex saving throw for half. Each round, the total damage dice of the pool is halved (10d6 round 2, 5d6 round 3, 2d6 round 4, 1d6 round 5) until the result would be less than 1d6. The acid pool floats on water and deals damage to anything on the surface.

**Acidic Bite (Su):** The dragon's bite deals an additional 4d6 points of acid damage.

**Corrupt Water (Sp):** Once per day the dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making

it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 19) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 feet.

**Crush (Ex):** If flying or jumping, the dragon can land on foes as a standard action, using its whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against opponents three or more size categories smaller than the dragon. A crush attack affects as many creatures as fit in the dragon's space. Creatures in the affected area must succeed on a Reflex saving throw (DC 25—equal to that of the dragon's breath weapon) or be pinned, automatically taking bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, it must succeed at a combat maneuver check as normal. Pinned foes take damage from the crush each round if they don't escape. A crush attack deals the indicated damage plus 1-1/2 times the dragon's Strength bonus.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** This special quality makes the dragon's very presence unsettling to foes. Activating this ability is a free action that is part of an attack or charge. Opponents within range (300 feet) who witness the action might become frightened or shaken for 5d6 rounds. This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the dragon. An opponent can resist the effects with a successful Will saving throw (DC 25). On a failed saving throw, the opponent is shaken, or panicked if it has 4 Hit Dice or fewer. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.



**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

#### CREDIT

Original stat block editor Charles Wright, with contributors Andrew Massey, McCaul Baggett, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.

#### HOARD

An ancient black dragon has thrived long enough that it becomes particular about what items it allows into its hoard. Each dragon will have different interests and tastes, and its hoard will reflect that. Many ancient dragons end up amassing incredible

collections of exotic weapons, strange objects from distant lands, and artwork depicting alien cultures.

From this point forward anything that strikes the dragon's interest can be found in its hoard, regardless of composition. If something seems too fragile to survive the treasure chamber of an ancient dragon's lair, he hires (or kidnaps) artisans to make a special container for the desired item.

**SLOW (49,500 GP):** +2 merciful siangham (18,003 gp), bottle of air (7,250 gp), rod of the python (13,000 gp), Ebon Sea Emirate prayer mat (1,000 gp) 9,247 gp.

**MEDIUM (75,000 GP):** +3 thundering scimitar (32,015 gp), ring of the ram (8,600 gp), pearl of power (5th-level spell; 25,000 gp), Dead Bog Empire spider silk overcoat (1,500 gp), 7,885 gp.

**FAST (114,000 GP):** +3 shocking burst scimitar (50,000 gp), +2 ghost touch sai (18,001 gp), staff of size alteration (26,150 gp), clay golem manual (12,000 gp), historical tapestry of the rise of Golden Argent Empire (2,300 gp), 5,549 gp.

#### UPPING THE ANTE

By this point in a dragon's life, word of its power and deeds has begun to spread far enough that it begins to attract a dedicated cult of followers. To increase the difficulty posed by an ancient black dragon, give it a collection of underlings: a relatively small cadre of highly-trained thieves, warriors and villains of levels 10–13. You can use the bandit lord, bounty hunter, captain, champion, cult leader,



general, guild master, high priest, merchant prince, pirate captain, (or even an antipaladin version of the saint) pregenerated NPCs in the GameMastery Guide for such allies.

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

Since black dragons of this age category often deal with bands of followers, they also start to cultivate the skills and temperament to take full advantage of this new resource.

## SCALED COMMANDER

This build goes particularly well with the options described in the “Upping the Ante” section. A scaled commander is a black dragon that not only has gathered a cult, but has a cohort and dedicated followers.

**Changes:** Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Leadership, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite); Cohort: With a Leadership score of 29 (including +2 for great renown, +1 for special power, -2 for cruelty, +2 for a base of operations, and -2 for causing the death of other followings twice), the ancient black dragon gains a 17th level cohort. Using the rule for young black dragons (cohort level = CR +8), and allowing +1 cohort level for the dragon’s high leadership score, the ancient black dragon can take an Young Adult black dragon as a cohort, representing a child, trusted aid, or protégé. And while 135 1st level characters may seem useless against 16th level PCs, they can easily form a broad perimeter for early warning against an attack on the ancient’s lair.

## BLACK DRAGON, WYRM

*Hissing green acid drips from the fanged maw of this enormous, black-scaled, horned dragon.*

### WYRM BLACK DRAGON CR 17

XP 102,400

CE Huge dragon (water)

**Init** +3; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +31

**Aura** frightful presence (330 ft., DC 26)

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 40, touch 7, flat-footed 40 (–1 Dex, +33 natural, –2 size)

**hp** 324 (24d12+168)

**Fort** +21, **Ref** +13, **Will** +19

**DR** 20/magic; Immune acid, paralysis, sleep, SR 28

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +35 (2d8+18 plus 4d6 acid), 2 claws +34 (2d6+12), 2 wings +32 (1d8+6), tail slap +32 (2d6+18)

**Space** 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** acid pool (55-ft. radius), acidic bite, breath weapon (100-ft. line, DC 29, 22d6 acid), corrupt water, crush (Small creatures, DC 29, 2d8+18)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 24th, concentration +28)

At will—*darkness* (110-ft. radius), *insect plague*, *plant growth*

**Spells Known** (CL 13th, concentration +17)

6th (4/day)—*acid fog*, *contingency*

5th (6/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 19), *dominate person*, *wall of force*

4th (7/day)—*arcane eye*, *black tentacles*, *dimension door*, *enervation*

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *heroism*, *hold person* (DC 17), *slow* (DC 17)

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *invisibility*, *summon swarm*, *whispering wind*

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 35, **Dex** 8, **Con** 25, **Int** 18, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 18

**Base Atk** +24; **CMB** +38; **CMD** 47 (51 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Combat Expertise, Flyby Attack, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Fly +18, Handle Animal +28, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (arcana) +31, Knowledge (geography) +31, Knowledge (history) +31, Perception +34, Spellcraft +31, Stealth +24, Swim +47; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc

**SQ** speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Acid Pool (Su):** The dragon can use its breath weapon to create an acid pool as a standard action. This acid pool has a radius of 50 feet. When an acid pool is created, anyone inside its area takes 20d6 points of acid damage (Reflex half). Any creature that starts its turn touching this pool takes damage, but can make a Reflex saving throw for half. Each round, the total damage dice of the pool is halved (10d6 round 2, 5d6 round 3, 2d6 round 4, 1d6 round 5) until the result would be less than 1d6. The acid pool floats on water, and deals damage to anything on the surface.





**Acidic Bite (Su):** The dragon's bite deals an additional 4d6 points of acid damage.

**Corrupt Water (Sp):** Once per day the dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-

based magical items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 19) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 feet.

**Crush (Ex):** If flying or jumping, the dragon can land on foes as a standard action, using its whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against opponents three or more size categories smaller than the dragon. A crush attack affects as many creatures as fit in the dragon's space. Creatures in the affected area must succeed on a Reflex saving throw (DC 25—equal to that of the dragon's breath weapon) or be pinned, automatically taking bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, it must succeed at a combat maneuver check

as normal. Pinned foes take damage from the crush each round if they don't escape. A crush attack deals the indicated damage plus 1-1/2 times the dragon's Strength bonus.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** This special quality makes the dragon's very presence unsettling to foes. Activating this ability is a free action that is part of an attack or charge. Opponents within range (330 feet) who witness the action might become frightened or shaken for 5d6 rounds. This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the dragon. An opponent can resist the effects with a successful Will saving throw (DC 26). On a failed saving throw, the opponent is shaken, or panicked if it has 4 Hit Dice or fewer. An opponent

that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

## CREDIT

Original stat block editor Timothy Johnson, with contributors Brett Carlos, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.

## HOARD

Black wyrms have further refined their hoards, seeking out not merely single items that suit their taste and interest, but acquiring specific examples of them. A dragon of this age category will have relatively few generic magic items and more items of legend, sets of matching or complementary items, and treasures created by master artists.

**SLOW (66,000 GP):** Lord Rhastazaar's staff of souls (APG, 16,400 gp), Archangel Xenthyr's glamered celestial armor (25,100 gp), General Arkalish's +2 furious warhammer (18,100 gp), 6,400 gp.

**MEDIUM (96,000 GP):** The Twin Blades of Oevanclair—a +2 flaming longsword (18,015 gp) and a +1 frost short sword (8,010 gp), The Cold Iron Warden's jailer's dungeon ring (APG, 16,000 gp), Father Epsyn's lantern of revealing (30,000 gp), chimes of interruption from the Ebon Cliff Monastery (16,800 gp), 7,175 gp.

**FAST (138,000 GP):** Death Maiden Hochenra's rig—a +3 unholy spear (50,002 gp), a +2 shock dagger (18,002 gp), and a +1 brilliant energy longbow (50,075 gp), Lyndarren's book of the loremaster (APG, 15,000 gp), 4,921 gp.

## UPPING THE ANTE

A black wyrm's reputation thrives not only among the weaker, soft races, but among dragonkind as well. A wyrm is so revered (and

feared) that other younger dragons flock to her side and offer their fealty. Some do this in hopes of learning from the older, wiser dragon, planning to eventually take these lessons and build their own hoard while carving out their own legends. Others are more pragmatic, knowing that a dragon's worst enemies are often other dragons, and they consider that having the black wyrm as a patron will vastly increase their life expectancies.

Have the wyrm's draconic retinue consist of one or two juvenile dragons, a half dozen young dragons, and ten or more wyrmlings—all of them black dragons.

## ALTERNATIVE BUILDS

The black wyrm is a dragon that has thrived for many years by always being one step ahead of its adversaries. Now that it has achieved this grand status, it no longer has anything to prove—it has power enough to stand toe-to-toe with nearly any creature in creation. And yet, that is just the time when a dragon as forward thinking and clever as this would take the extra step and master basic tactics and maneuvers to give itself an unexpected extra advantage.

### WAR WYRM

This dragon has taken time to study the tactics and practice the combat maneuvers employed by its mortal enemies. In addition to being a physically imposing, immensely powerful creature, it is also a master of numerous combat maneuvers. It can trip foes, shatter their weapons, and drive them off cliffsides with ease.

**Changes:** Init: -1; Feats Flyby Attack, Greater Trip, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved

Sunder, Improved Trip, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite); Skills Fly +18, Handle Animal +28, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (arcana) +31, Knowledge (geography) +31, Knowledge (history) +31, Perception +30, Spellcraft +31, Stealth +18, Swim +47

## BLACK DRAGON, GREAT WYRM

*An aura of pure power surrounds this dragon, its horned head rising dozens of feet high and its wingspan able to blot out the sky. Streams of steaming acid roll down from its jaw, and its spiked scales drink in all light.*

### GREAT WYRM BLK DRAGON CR 19

XP 204,800

CE Gargantuan dragon (water)

**Init** +3; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +39

**Aura** frightful presence (360 ft., DC 28)

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 41, touch 5, flat-footed 41 (–1 Dex, +36 natural, –4 size)

**hp** 377 (26d12+208)

**Fort** +23, **Ref** +14, **Will** +21

**DR** 20/magic; **Immune** acid, paralysis, sleep, SR 30

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +36 (4d6+19 plus 6d6 acid), 2 claws +35 (2d8+13), 2 wings +33 (2d6+6), tail slap +33 (2d8+19)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (20 ft. with bite)

**Special Attacks** acid pool (60-ft. radius), acidic bite, breath weapon (120-ft. line, DC 31, 24d6 acid), corrupt water, crush (Medium creatures, DC 31, 4d6+19), tail sweep (Small creatures, 2d6+19, DC 31)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 26th, concentration +31)

At will—*darkness* (120-ft. radius), *insect plague*, *plant growth*

**Spells Known** (CL 15th, concentration +20)

7th (4/day)—*force cage*, *power word blind*

6th (6/day)—*acid fog*, *contingency*, *disintegrate*

5th (7/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 19), *dominate person*, *wall of force*, *waves of fatigue*

4th (7/day)—*arcane eye*, *black tentacles*, *dimension door*, *enervation*

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *heroism*, *hold person* (DC 17), *slow* (DC 17)

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *invisibility*, *summon swarm*, *whispering wind*

1st (8/day)—*alarm*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *true strike*

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*, *resistance*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 37, **Dex** 8, **Con** 27, **Int** 20, **Wis** 23, **Cha** 20

**Base Atk** +26; **CMB** +43; **CMD** 52 (56 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Combat Expertise, Critical Focus, Flyby Attack, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (Bite), Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Skills** Fly +14, Handle Animal +31, Intimidate +34, Knowledge (arcana) +34, Knowledge (geography) +34, Knowledge (history) +34, Perception +39, Spellcraft +34, Stealth +22, Survival +35, Swim +50; Racial Modifiers +8 Swim

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc

**SQ** speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing



## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Acid Pool (Su):** The dragon can use its breath weapon to create an acid pool as a standard action. This acid pool has a radius of 50 feet. When an acid pool is created, anyone inside its area takes 20d6 points of acid damage (Reflex half). Any creature that starts its turn touching this pool takes damage, but can make a Reflex saving throw for half. Each round, the total damage dice of the pool is halved (10d6 round 2, 5d6 round 3, 2d6 round 4, 1d6 round 5) until the result would be less than 1d6. The acid pool floats on water, and deals damage to anything on the surface.

**Acidic Bite (Su):** The dragon's bite deals an additional 6d6 points of acid damage.

**Charm Reptiles (Sp):** The great wyrm can use this ability three times per day. It works as a mass charm monster spell that affects only reptilian animals. This ability is the equivalent of an 8th-level spell.

**Corrupt Water (Sp):** Once per day the dragon can stagnate 10 cubic feet of still water, making it foul and unable to support water-breathing life. The ability spoils liquids containing water. Liquid-based magic items (such as potions) and items in a creature's possession must succeed on a Will saving throw (DC 28) or become ruined. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell. Its range is 180 feet.

**Crush (Ex):** If flying or jumping, the dragon can land on foes as a standard action, using its whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against opponents three or more size categories smaller than the dragon. A crush attack affects as many creatures as fit in the dragon's space. Creatures in the affected area must succeed on a Reflex saving throw (DC



25—equal to that of the dragon's breath weapon) or be pinned, automatically taking bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, it must succeed at a combat maneuver check as normal. Pinned foes take damage from the crush each round if they don't escape. A crush attack deals the indicated damage plus 1–1/2 times the dragon's Strength bonus.

**Frightful Presence (Ex):** This special quality makes the dragon's very presence unsettling to foes. Activating this ability is a free action that is part of an attack or charge. Opponents within range (360 feet) who witness the action might become frightened or shaken for 5d6 rounds. This ability affects only opponents with fewer Hit Dice than the dragon. An opponent can resist the effects with a successful Will saving throw (DC 28). On a failed saving throw, the opponent is shaken, or panicked if it has 4 Hit Dice or fewer. An opponent that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the dragon's frightful presence for 24 hours. Frightful presence is a mind-affecting fear effect.

**Speak with Reptiles (Sp):** The dragon has the constant spell-like ability to speak with reptiles. This functions as speak with animals, but only with reptilian animals.

**Swamp Stride (Ex):** The dragon can move through bogs and quicksand without penalty at its normal speed.

**Tail Sweep (Ex):** This allows the Gargantuan dragon to sweep with its tail as a standard action. The sweep affects a half-circle with a radius of 30 feet extending from an intersection on the edge of the dragon's space in any direction. Creatures within the swept area are affected if they are four or more size categories smaller than the dragon. A tail sweep automatically deals the indicated damage plus 1–1/2 times the dragon's Strength bonus (round down).

Affected creatures can attempt Reflex saving throws to take half damage (DC 31—equal to that of the dragon's breath weapon).

**Water Breathing (Ex):** The dragon can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use its breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

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#### CREDIT

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Original stat block editor Timothy Johnson, with contributors Andrew Massey, Brett Carlos, Vladimir Presnyak, and John Reyst.

### HOARD

The hoard of a great wyrm is the equivalent of a kingdom's treasury, or the ransom of a major city. It contains both major items rarely found outside the halls of greatest heroes and mightiest wizards, and the backlog of spoils gathered throughout the dragon's centuries-long lifetime. Many of the things held are of value only to the dragon itself—the magic sword taken from the corpse of the first dragonslayer it ever encountered, a wand offered in tribute by the first lizardfolk tribe to worship it as a god. But it also contains major items the dragon knows bring it prestige, and the eyes of greedy adventurers everywhere.

**SLOW (132,000 GP):** +5 adamantine full plate (41,500 gp), greater metamagic rod of extend (24,500 gp), ring of wizardry (I) (20,000 gp), +1 keen bane (vs. dragons) longsword (18,315 gp), cloak of resistance +4 (16,000 gp), statue of the dragon made of onyx (1,200 gp), darkwood buckler (215 gp), 9,567 gp, 4,030 sp, 30,000 cp.

**MEDIUM (201,000 GP):** +5 adamantine full plate (41,500 gp), greater metamagic rod of empower (32,500 gp), ring of wizardry (II) (40,000 gp), +1 keen bane (vs. dragons) longsword (18,315 gp), cloak of resistance +5 (25,000 gp), minor ring of energy resistance (acid) (12,000 gp), gold-plated throne for a Medium creature (5,000 gp), diamond (5,000 gp), statue of the dragon made of onyx (1,200 gp), darkwood buckler (215 gp), 19,567 gp, 4,030 sp, 30,000 cp.

**FAST (300,000 GP):** crystal ball with see invisibility (50,000 gp), +5 adamantine full plate (41,500 gp), ring of freedom of movement (40,000 gp), greater metamagic rod of empower (32,500 gp), ring of wizardry (II) (40,000 gp), +1 keen bane (vs. dragons) longsword (18,315 gp), cloak of resistance +5 (25,000 gp), minor ring of energy resistance (acid) (12,000 gp), +1 silver-dragon dragonhide shadow half-plate (6,550 gp), gold-plated throne for a Medium creature (5,000 gp), diamond (5,000 gp), statue of the dragon made of onyx (1,200 gp), powdered silver (1,000 gp), woven silk carpet depicting a city being destroyed by a black dragon (450 gp), darkwood buckler (215 gp), 19,567 gp, 4,030 sp, 130,000 cp.



## UPPING THE ANTE

The black great wyrm rarely faces a true threat. It is the lord of a territory at least the size of a small kingdom, and it might well command servants powerful enough to act as major foes in their own right. Lesser black dragons, sorcerers of all races, kraken, froghearth, sea serpents and dragon turtles might all serve such a great wyrm more-or-less willingly, and might serve as spies, sentries, advisors, diplomats, and shock troops (depending on their relative ability and intelligence).

However it's also worth remembering that at this age, the black dragon can use its charm reptiles spell-like ability three times per day, and it has a duration of 26 days. If used to best effect, this could allow the dragon to charm 78 different reptiles. Even if some leeway is assumed, a black great wyrm can easily maintain 40 or so charmed reptiles without spending all its time renewing charms. Popular choices are giant anacondas (see Bestiary 2) and dire crocodiles, but tyrannosaurs, tylosaurus, and snakes are all useful in the right circumstances as well. And while a party capable of facing a CR 19 black dragon might ignore a single dire crocodile, a pack of twenty such creatures is a different matter.

## ALTERNATIVE BUILD

As a GM, running a CR 19 great wyrm black dragon is like running a 15th-level sorcerer, a super-genius tactician, and a 26th-level monk with an acid jet all at once. It can get complicated very quickly, and more than one such foe has been defeated by PCs simply because the GM didn't think to use the dragon's abilities to their maximum effect.

The following build is designed to be as low-impact an NPC to run as a CR 19 dragon can get. A change in spell and feat selection focuses on abilities that operate without the GM having to make difficult decisions. The values for Power Attack and Greater Vital Strike are presented as an alternative attack, and the GM uses that single attack when the dragon has only a standard action, and the full attack routine if it has a full action. Quicken Spell allows the dragon to cast its most useful low-level spells without losing the rest of its round, and only spells likely to be cast in combat are listed in the stat block. (The full spell list, including numerous scrying and communication spells to ensure the great wyrm is never surprised, is presented below).

7th (4/day)—*greater teleport, spell turning*  
6th (6/day)—*contingency, fluid form (APG), true seeing*  
5th (7/day)—*permanency, prying eyes, secret chest, sending*  
4th (7/day)—*arcane eye, detect scrying, remove curse, scrying*  
3rd (7/day)—*arcane sight, displacement, heroism, protection from energy*  
2nd (7/day)—*bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, owl's wisdom, resist energy*  
1st (8/day)—*alarm, mage armor, protection from good, shield, true strike*  
0 (at will)—*dancing lights, detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, message, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance*

The following spells are assumed to all have been cast on the great wyrm in its stat

block below. Even the +2 bonuses from heroism are already added in to saving throws, attack rolls, and skill checks. Until someone dispels these (against which the great wyrm does not get its SR), it benefits from this full list of magic augmentations. When spells do begin to get dispelled, only take time to recast those with quickened versions listed in the spells section of the stats block below. Of course a targeted dispel magic will be rebounded by spell turning, so you should have at least a few rounds of maximized draconic power.

Here are the active spells represented in the stat block below, from highest to lowest level.

7—*spell turning*  
6—*contingency (remove curse if cursed), fluid form, true seeing*  
5—*prying eyes, secret chest*  
3—*arcane sight (permanent), heroism, protection from energy (fire)*  
2—*bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, owl's wisdom, resist energy (lightning)*  
1—*mage armor, shield*  
0—*detect magic (permanent)*

Although the CR of this great wyrm isn't any higher than a typical CR 19 black dragon, an encounter where it has had 13 rounds to prepare the spells listed in the stat block (only a little over a minute) is likely to be at least 2 CRs higher than a typical dragon encounter. Also note that 15 cubic feet of the dragon's hoard is kept in its secret chest, making it difficult for PCs to access immediately even if they defeat the dragon.

## PREPARED SIMPLE BLACK GREAT WYRM

*This house-sized dragon seems to be made of black oil, and its overly long neck flows like a river. Waves of magic defenses flicker over its spiked hide, and acid drips off its fangs to boil the stone beneath its feat.*

### GREAT WYRM BLK DRAGON CR 19

XP 204,800

CE Gargantuan dragon (water)

**Init** ++5; **Senses** dragon senses, arcane sight, detect magic, 17 prying eyes, true seeing; **Perception** +41

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 51, touch 7, flat-footed 50 (+1 Dex, +36 natural, +4 mage armor, +4 shield, -4 size)

**hp** 429 (26d12+260)

**Fort** +27, **Ref** +18, **Will** +25

**DR** 20/magic or DR 10/slashing; Immune acid, paralysis, sleep; **SR** 30; protection from energy (fire) 120 hp, resist energy (lightning) 30, spell turning (10 spell levels)

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 60 ft., fly 250 ft. (clumsy), swim 60 ft.

**Melee** bite +34 (4d6+40 plus 6d6 acid plus 12d6, 19–20) (Power Attack and Greater Vital Strike) or Melee bite +40 (4d6+22 plus 6d6 acid, 19–20), 2 claws +39 (2d8+15), 2 wings +37 (2d6+6), tail slap +37 (2d8+19)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 25 ft.; 30 ft. with bite (15 ft./20 ft. with bite, +10 ft. fluid form)

**Special Attacks** acid pool (60-ft. radius), acidic bite, breath weapon (120-ft. line, DC 33, 24d6 acid), corrupt water, crush (Medium creatures, DC 33, 4d6+19), tail sweep (Small creatures, 2d6+19, DC 33)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 26th, concentration +31)

At will—*darkness* (120-ft. radius), *insect plague*, *plant growth*

**Crucial Spells Known** (CL 15th, concentration +20)

7th (3/day, +1 cast)—*quickened protection from energy*, *greater teleport*

6th (4/day, +2 cast)—*quickened resist energy*,

5th (5/day, +2 cast)—*quickened mage armor*, *quickened shield*, *quickened true strike*

3rd (5/day, +2 cast)—*heroism*, *protection from energy*

2nd (2/day, +5 cast)—*resist energy*

1st (6/day, +2 cast)—*protection from good*, *true strike*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 41 (37 +4 bull's strength), **Dex** 12 (8 +4 cat's grace), **Con** 31 (27 +4 bear's endurance), **Int** 20, **Wis** 27 (23 +4 owl's wisdom), **Cha** 20

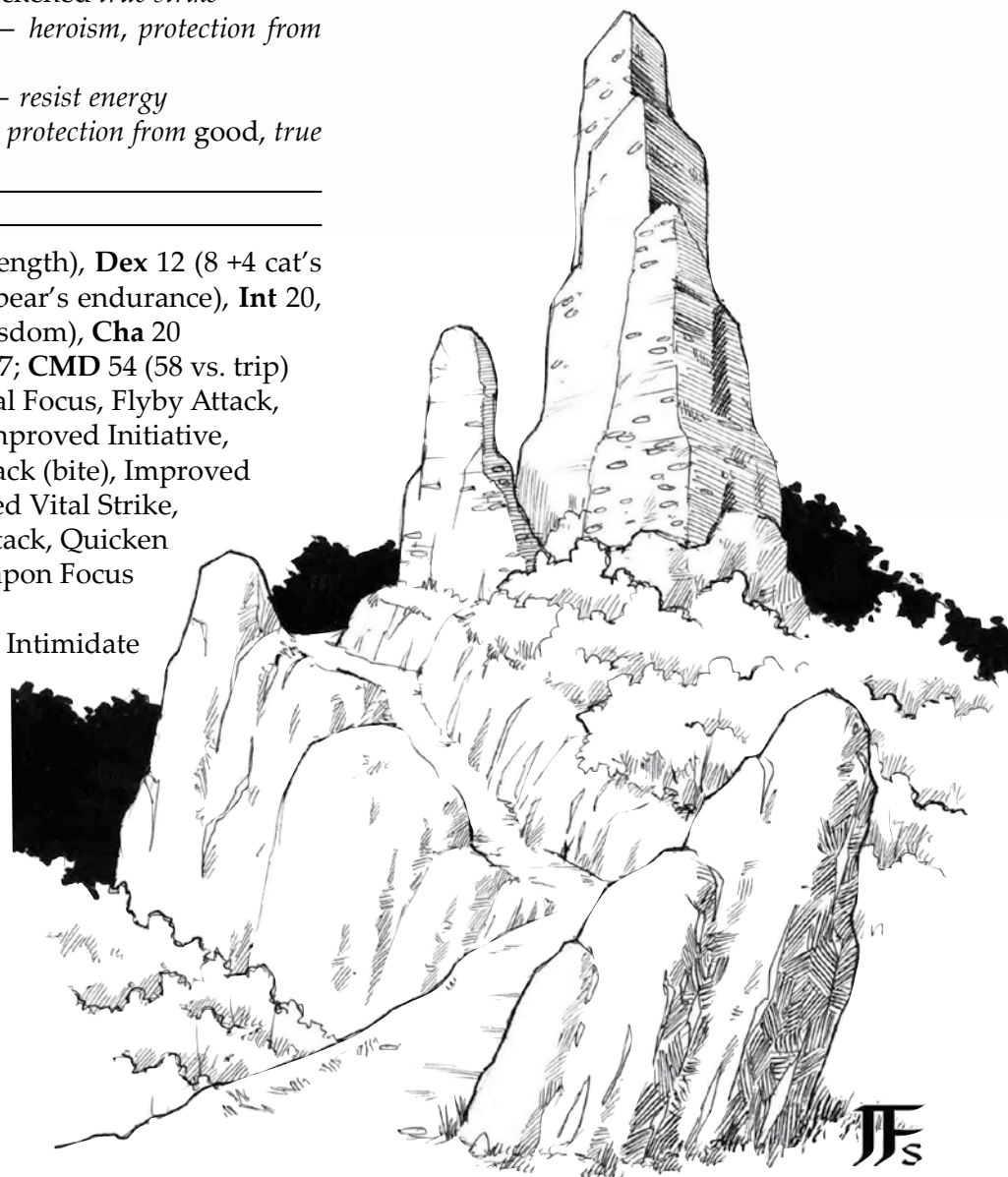
**Base Atk** +26; **CMB** +47; **CMD** 54 (58 vs. trip)

**Feats** Alertness, Critical Focus, Flyby Attack, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Critical (bite), Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

**Crucial Skills** Fly +16, Intimidate +36, Perception +41, Spellcraft +36, Stealth +16, Swim +54

#### Languages

Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc  
**SQ** charm reptiles, speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing





# WE ERR ON THE SIDE OF AWESOME!

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