



A Melange of Magical Creatures X

for *GURPS*

by Eric Funk

"X" marks the spot for this, the tenth installment of oddball creatures, suitable out of the box of a fantasy campaign, or tweakable for inclusion in a myriad of other settings.

Plastic Guard Dog Golems - Wild Dolems

"Among the oddest magical creatures to escape to the wild were a pack of canine-shaped golems. Designed and built by a hobbyist who was experimenting on getting a more playful (if less intelligent) golem, they display an unusual degree of cooperation and independent thought. They listen."

-- Sage Camius, *Golems and You*

These dog golems, or dolems, appear to be medium to large-sized canines with a glossy, flowing coat. Despite the fact that they do not represent life as we know it, they do meet the basic criteria: they consume magical energy, and somehow reproduce. While at first glance, these caninoids appear to be ordinary dogs, a telltale lack of apertures or details in the eyes, nose, and ears reveals their nature. The color of wild dolems range from a light gray to a pitch black.

Encountered

Heroes are most likely to encounter them as pets of the wealthy, or while wandering different ruins. In the wild, they are likely to come to the aid of humanoids, should they hear cries of alarm or fear. If it is a case of humanoids fighting humanoids, then a GM should make Reaction Rolls for both parties. If one roll is 6 more than their opponent the dolems will intervene. Otherwise, the dolems will hold off until combat is over, and then the effects of the Reaction Rolls will take place.

A GM is encouraged to make a Reaction roll with the animals. A roll of 19+ means that the dolem automatically impresses upon one of the PCs, if it has no current master. It is a Contest of Will at -5 to impress one's will upon a creature. The roll is at an additional -10 if they currently have a master.

Industrial Uses

"So there we were, locked in combat with the duke's men, just for carrying a tree we had felled on our lord's land. A glancing blow had felled our tracker, Deborah. Just then, combat stilled for a moment, as a chorus of barking was heard nearby. As half the combatants worried about who was coming, everyone was surprised to see a pack of dogs circle the combat, but not approach. Combat picked up, and a kick roused Deborah d'Forrester. Knifing one of the mercenaries, the tracker rose to a crouch. Recognizing the canines as dolems, she called out to them. Her animal magnetism did something, as they closed in and helped us win the day! The pack still follows her to this day."

-- Kanih, Sentinel of the West Wood

Many organizations have found uses for dolems as guard dogs that do not need to eat, sleep, or breathe. Unfortunately for them, dolems are too playful to make effective border guards. These canines seem to have a minor aversion to permanently harming people. They can grapple, and (if trained) cause pain. Enchanters have found some use in melting down the "corpses" of dogs and forging a single man-sized golem. Research continues into how they reproduce. It is suspected that a mated pair of canines performs the equivalent of a Slow and Sure enchantment ritual on the "unborn" pup, for 65 days, the minimum cost of a smaller golem (130 energy, page 59 of *Magic*).

Adventure

The adventurers happen to impress upon a free dog or two. An honest man seeks to purchase them to help protect his cattle. The problem is that the man has a weak will, and cannot impress himself on them, no matter how hard he tries. What will the heroes do to try to aid the process? Perhaps the heroes could get someone to cast spells to increase the man's will and lower the PCs' for a few minutes. If that does not work, could the hero be brought to the point of death so that the dogs become masterless for a few critical moments? And if this crazy scheme is tried, what enemies will be waiting for the opportunity while the PCs' defenses are down?

Wild Dolems

Appearance: Medium-sized canine of various pedigrees, with a silky, glossy coat.

Category: Golem.

Diet: Manavore (Ambient).

ST 8 to 10; **DX** 11; **IQ** 4; **HT** 13.

Will 10; Per 10; Speed 6; Dodge 9; Move 6.

SM -1 to +0 (4.5' to 6') (1 to 2 hexes); 100-200 lbs; DR 2 (+DR4 vs. fire).

Traits: Claws (Blunt); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Domestic Animal;

Dependency (FP; Mana: In Low Mana, cannot recover above 1/3 FP); Injury Tolerance

(Homogenous); Night Vision; Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents); Sealed; Sleepy (100% (over 7/8);

No Mana Zone Only -80%); Teeth (Sharp); Weak Bite.

Note: Different [materials](#) will affect the statistics of a dolem. As presented, the dolems can swim, retaining air. If made of a denser material, such as gold, they would quickly sink.

Giant Wild Dolems

ST 15-20; **DX** 8; **IQ** 4; **HT** 16.

Will 12; Per 12; Speed 6; Dodge 9; Move 6.

SM +0 to +1 (6' to 9') (2 hexes to 6 hexes); 200-300 lbs; DR 5 (+DR7 vs. fire).

Traits: As above, plus Enhanced Move 0.5 (Ground Move 9).

Variant: What happens when the dolem "parents" roll a "critical failure" or "critical success" is up to the GM, whether it be an insane, large, and aggressive golem, or a hole in space/time.

Combat Symbiont

"For centuries, the secret nature of this controversial creature has been known to no fewer than two dozen secret agencies and societies, from the peaceful Shan-Yo-Shin monks to the bloodthirsty Crimmerin berserkers. Each sect discovered that burning certain herbs in the right order will attract and pacify the fertile adult insect, and when the mother insect is pressed against the subject's body, inject it with an egg."

-- *Insect Warriors*, Insect Warfare Book IL

This biomod is actually the side effect of the chrysalis stage of a large winged insect. The side-effects are actually part of its life cycle, designed to enhance a mammalian life form while the young is vulnerable. A host's skin is toughened, his reflexes heightened, and combat injury is healed quickly. In the wild, natural creatures can sense the approach of an adult insect, and will react accordingly. Humans no longer have these instincts, but can take advantage of the boost in ability the incubation brings. In *GURPS* terms, the temporary advantages gained are Damage Resistance 1 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3], High Pain Threshold [10], Combat Reflexes [15], and Regeneration (Slow) [10] for a total of 38 points. (The number of points is fewer if the PC already possesses any of these traits; as presented, these advantages follow the Affliction rules in the *Basic Set* that only traits missing are added. A generous GM might make the process *additive*. Thus someone who already possesses Regeneration (Slow) might temporarily be blessed with Regeneration (Regular), and someone with Combat Reflexes gains the benefits of Enhanced Time Sense. In English, this means that the host gets a lot tougher to protect the larva.)

To perform the safest implantation requires a successful roll against Physician-3, Physiology, or Animal Handling (Combat Symbiont). A failure still results in a successful implantation, except that the damages inflicted when exiting and recovery times are doubled. A failure is easily visible on medical examination rolls afterward. On a critical failure, it is not obviously in the wrong place, but the values will be tripled. A critical failure's flaw is detectable on a critical success on an appropriate medical roll. Any of these causes 1HP of damage.

The victim and the symbiont must compete in a Quick Contest of **HT** every 20-HT days (minimum 1). If the victim wins, the symbiont loses 1 point of HT. If the symbiont wins, it steals one HP from its host. Regeneration does not recover this. On a tie, there is no effect this week. If the creature's **HT** is reduced to 0, it dies. If it has absorbed HP equal to its original **HT** score (normally 10), it will begin to hatch, taking one week to do so. Animals seem to be able to sense when the symbiont is about to hatch. Starting a week before the event, the victim gains a cumulative -1 to reaction rolls toward animals each day. These penalties are gone 1d hours after the creature leaves. When the egg hatches, it leaves painfully (1 damage, plus 1d FP damage, and 1d "stunning" damage that lasts for 2d seconds.) Furthermore, the victim's pain receptors are heightened for 20-HT days (effectively Low Pain Threshold, or canceling the High Pain Threshold advantage, if the victim had possessed it). To curb eager players (or PCs), a GM should enforce the Healing Fright Check rules from *Powers*, p. 194. Gaining mental disadvantages might also curb use. Heroes who change their mind can have a surgeon remove the creature, but this process causes 3d damage to the patient, less the degree of success of the surgeon. If the surgeon has a diagnosis on hand that shows the location and internal linkage of the creature to remove (such as X-ray or vision spell), then the damage is roll reduced to 2d, less the degree of success. Extra time can be taken in the process, unless it is in the final day of hatching, of course. Lost HP is recovered normally.

Encountered

This is another creature that adventurers may first meet in combat, likely encountering host bodies. Alternatively, the heroes could be the natural victims of the creature in the wild. Either way, they will have the difficult decision to make as to whether to continue to make use of this amplification of abilities. Another way inject this creature into a campaign is to bring in an NPC that needs counseling and support to recover from an addiction to the high the symbionts bring.

Industrial Uses

"Yez, it iz meszy, but vhat biomods come without a price?"

-- Mme. Ethervocce, Clinique Noire

These creatures have seen some use in protecting work- and war-horses, but the animals are skittish when the adult creatures are around. Some dictatorial organizations have started to treat all soldiers with this treatment up until they are not augmented at all. Comparing the soldier's performance before and after injection finds performance goals. This is a double incentive for most soldiers to train hard. Popular enchantment uses include booster items and animal wards. Competitive research is likely taking place in keeping the larvae dormant as long as possible without draining HP (or slowing the drain as to be unnoticeable). If such drugs are available, then PCs should have to pay for such advantages, with a limitation -10%, Biological.

Adventure

The adventurers awaken one morning, perhaps in town, and find themselves bitten. The heroes encounter some woodcutters who also found themselves drugged to sleep. These men have no signs of attack, however. The heroes soon find that their moves are being watched from afar. From town to town, there are similar men in gray. If cornered somehow, or a PC hits the one-week countdown, the mysterious men will confess to interest in the symbionts, and offer to take them off the heroes' hands, and pay for the creatures. They do not know their patron, nor who actually implanted the creatures in the PCs.

Unborn Burst Bug

Appearance: An egg or cocoon.

Category: Insect.

Diet: Carnivore (Host).

ST -; DX -; IQ 1; HT 10.

Will 10; Per -; Speed -; Dodge -; Move -.

SM -6 (6"-7"); 1 lb; DR 2; 1 HP.

Hatchling Burst Bug

Appearance: A cross between a winged ant and a mosquito.

Category: Insect.

Diet: Carnivore.

ST 2; DX 12; IQ 2; HT 12.

Will 8; Per 8; Speed 5; Dodge 10; Move 5.

SM -5 (10" long) (-4 with wings unfurled); 2 lbs; DR 2.

Traits: Attack (Single Attack: Bite; Armor Piercing (2); Link); Enhanced Move 1 (Air Move 20); Flight (Winged; Air Move 10); Frightens Animals; Sealed; Teeth (Impaling); Weak Bite; Wild Animal; **Skills:** Animal Handling (Combat Symbiont)-12.

Adult Burst Bug

ST 3; **DX** 11; **IQ** 3; **HT** 13.

Will 12; Per 12; Speed 6; Dodge 10; Move 6 (Air Move 24).

SM -4 (18" long) (-3 with wings unfurled); 3 lbs; DR 2.

Fire Blossom

"The Yosird Alchemist's Guild is first credited with the discovery of the effects of evoking all of a fire blossom's heat at once. Great study was made with the retroscope to piece together what happened and to studiously copy their notes from the crater that was once the site of their guild house and lab."

-- *Flowers of War*, Book II

These heavy plants grow low to the ground and their dark bloom has almost-black petals arrayed radially outward. The blossom and petals radiate almost no light, making it difficult to judge a person's distance from a group of them. While this plant absorbs most of the radiation the environment gives out, it emits heat. This makes it very visible to infrared, and causes weaker nearby plants to wilt. Despite these dramatic effects, it is the mundane qualities of the fire blossom that get the most attention. The roots and stem of the fire blossom are very thick, naturally flame resistant (Highly Resistant 20, page 433 of the *Basic Set*) and are able to support a lot of weight and sheer stress before breaking. This makes the fire blossom useful in the fight against erosion.

Encountered

These plants like to grow in temperate climates where there is slightly sandy soil. The overall growth of the plant is proportional to the amount of sunlight it receives. Naturalists who have studied fire blossoms may know them as plants to camp near on cold nights.

Industrial Uses

"Hey dude, do you have unsightly tree stumps or fish in your yard? Blast'em out of there! It's flower power, man!"

-- Slogan of the Daisy Demolition Company

The incredibly tough fibers in the plant's growths are used to temper many other papers and filter products. The stalks make for excellent crossbow bolt shafts. Some military researchers are trying to harness the light-absorbing (or perhaps perception-distorting) properties for a stealth system. It was noted that enough stalks in the same area can cause paper to ignite! There is some research into using the plants to heat boilers, although it is difficult to give them enough sunlight to keep alive. While analysts are mainly looking into the enchantment of spells of darkness and protection from sunburn, others are dabbling in the effects of transmutation and fusion. A use for fireblossom byproducts might be to construct paper balloons from them . . .

Adventure

As a reward, the heroes are given a milk-run mission to transport a cart of young fire blossoms to a border lord's castle and attend a banquet celebrating the lord's achievements. While at the ball, they overhear a plot to steal the shipment and kill all the plants to turn them into crossbow bolts and magic wands.

Fire Blossom

Appearance: Fat plants, low to the ground with dark, almost black leaves. The flowers are pitch black, not unlike a carnation, with a small yellow patch in the center.

Category: Plant.

Diet: Photovore.

HT 10; 1 HP.

SM -3 (2' tall); 5 lbs; DR 2 (DR vs. Fire).

Notable Characteristics: Environmental Control (Heat; Always On); Temperature Tolerance 1 (Cold); Temperature Tolerance 40 (Heat);

Giant Fire Blossom

HT 12; 4 HP.

SM -1 (4.5' tall); 20 lbs; DR 4 (DR 10 vs. Fire).

Notable Characteristics: As above, but the Environmental Control trait has the Extended Range 2 enhancement.

Fanbird

"These big geese make for good eating. I have had to let more than one man go for claiming that the engines were bad, just to get a good meal out of it."

-- Captain Argin of the fan-cutter *Mar-Turin*

These goose-like flightless birds have large blunt beaks. Although they usually possess gray plumage, they can come in a rainbow of colors. What makes these birds stand out is their ability to actively flap for hours at a time. It is believed that this is a defense against predators, and it aids to draw insects toward itself. With its goose-like instinct, when one fanbird starts fanning, the rest of its flock moves in sequence. The rest of the flock then helps, frightening off predators with debris, or fanning prey into the other birds' mouths.

Encountered

Fan-bird wings are a favorite menu item in businesses and industry as one wing can feed a whole family, and is low in fat. Small and medium towns will likely find these birds more energy efficient than magical enchantment for air movement. Rural bicycle messengers have found some success in keeping one fanbird on a rear basket as a supplemental engine. A power-assisted departure certainly gives the impression of speed.

Industrial Uses

*"These fanbirds never worked a day in their life. Now you don't have to, either! De-Luxx Fried Fowl brings you hot wings right to your door!**

* Some restrictions apply. Not available in some areas. Check flyer for details."

-- Billboard in the *Worik* bazaar.

Some enterprising companies have sought to employ fan birds as an alternative to sails on boats. Air flow is critical in mines and industrial plants; these birds can serve that purpose well, as they suffer fewer ill effects of industrial pollution than those humans and animals employed at such facilities. Fanbirds open enchantment possibilities throughout most of the air college, but items that work with air golems and items that increase stamina are also aided. Finally, birds that have worked less have more fat on them and thus are perceived as more tasty.

Adventure

The adventurers are hired to lead a flock of fanbirds to a stalled ship. When they get there, they are ambushed by pirates who seek to steal all the birds and use them for food.

Fanbird

Appearance: A heavy, goose-like bird with small legs and a large, blunt beak.

Category: Avian.

Diet: Carnivore (Insectivore).

ST 5; DX 12; IQ 4; HT 16.

Will 12; Per 10; Speed 7; Dodge 10; Move 4/7* (Water 3/6*).

SM -2 (3' tall) (SM+0 wings unfurled); 20-30 lbs; DR 1.

Traits: Amphibious; Extra FP 3 (Only to power Knack; Can only be depleted by knack); Filter Lungs; Flight (Winged; Gliding*; Air Move 14); Knack (Air Jet, Self-Power 1); Pressure Support 1; Temperature Tolerance 2; Domestic Animal; Very Fat.

* Full move requires flapping wings.

** Can fly in gravities under 0.4G

Giant Fanbird

ST 10; DX 11; IQ 4; HT 16.

Will 13; Per 11; Speed 7; Dodge 10; Move 5/7* (Water Move 4/7*).

SM +0 (6' tall) (+1 with wings unfurled); 40-60 lbs; DR 2.

Traits: As above, but the Energy bank is 10 FP, and Knack is self-power 3.

Housegoat

"I was warned that the coastal dwellers of this low-lying country were unusual. I recall my first visit to 'the pond,' a residential quarter composed of dozens of floating homes lashed together. The sparkling walls of the dwellings glistened in the sun. There appeared to be one or two drifting, about to collide with the shore. I hope to never forget that sense of amazement when it stepped up the ramp onto shore."

-- Alinus the Bard, *My Winter in Ilisgrad*

This creature appears to be a cross between a gargantuan goat, turtle, and snail. Found in almost any color, housegoats range from two yards in length to about 10 or 20 yards after about fifty years of age. As far as anyone knows, none have ever died of old age; they just grow larger. Those left to graze tend to be luminous, even mother-of-pearl. Company-grown housegoats are often black or white, depending on the climate. Different hormones cause different color hair and chitin to grow. If fed the same diet throughout its life, a housegoat would take on a deep, complete color. Fed a slowly changing regime of a rainbow of colors, it will be reflected in its skin and shell. At the rate they move, they can slowly strain the water for food, or graze on grass. By spraying different hormones on the shell, growth can be inhibited to ensure floors remain floors, and walls caused to grow faster.

Encountered

Housegoat pods can form floating cities, so people might live their entire lives without ever seeing the living side of one of their "buildings," or setting foot on solid ground. These creatures are also popular wandering homes for hermits and recluses. Various militaries are also trying to use these gentle giants as outposts to monitor borders. It might also make for a floating lighthouse by a shoal or reef.

Industrial Uses

"There is **nothing** as spectacular as the Winter Palace of the Eternal Emperor of Rinshalnd. This magnificent creature is over 14 centuries old, a gift from the 43rd King of Atlantica. The opalescent palace on its back towers over 10 stories in the air. What a sight, folks. It is said that this shining jewel can be seen from a hundred miles away, over the horizon. For that reason, it is usually escorted by two battleships. Today, on this momentous occasion, I spot four cruisers alongside the palace."

-- Lady Jeria, to her public journal, *On the Royal Jubilee*

Commercial interests have found uses for these creatures as floating platforms. Those corporations that can plan long far enough ahead tailor these creatures to their own goals. Various interest groups link pods of creatures to form floating or roaming cities. Housegoats might make for powerful land fortresses in low-tech battles. The amphibious nature of the beast makes them equally useful when attacking by sea. Enchanters are giddy with this long-term investment. If the entire non-living shell is enchanted with a spell, and it lasts as the creature grows, the entire shell still remains enchanted with the same spells. The ethical problem remains that these ancient, majestic creatures do not seem to die of old age.

Adventure

The house goat the PCs are on has been hijacked. Who is controlling the beast? How can they afford the energy to affect a creature this large? Where are they headed? Will they wait to find out? If the housegoat is already heading out to sea, can the adventurers call for help?

Housegoat (Typical 50-100 year old, depending on diet)

Appearance: A large mammal-reptile with a shell on its back.

Category: Hybrid (Mammal-reptile-mollusk).

Diet: Herbivore.

ST 100; **DX** 8; **IQ** 5; **HT** 12.

Will 12; Per 8; Speed 5; Dodge 8; Move 5 (Water Move 1).

SM +5 (35-45' long); 50 tons; DR 10 (DR20 shell).

Traits: Amphibious; Appearance +2 (Awe); Domestic Animal; Horizontal; Night Vision 4; Peripheral Vision; Scanning Sense (Sonar); Sealed; Temperature Tolerance 3; Unaging (Nuisance effect: grows larger); Very Fit; Weak Bite.

Skills: Survival (Plains)-12; Survival (Open Ocean)-12.

Newborn Housegoat

ST 10; **DX** 10; **IQ** 4; **HT** 10.

Will 10; Per 7; Speed 5; Dodge 8; Move 1.

SM +2 (15' long, 4 hexes); 500 lbs; DR 2 (DR 5 shell).

Gongbird

"Arriving at the inn late in the evening, I was awakened just before dawn by a cacophony of gongs and cymbals. Opening the window and squinting into the twilight, I was surprised to see a flock of parrots with cymbals on their chests. Banging their armored discs with their beaks, the birds made a great ruckus. At this, my hopes of a good night's sleep flew the coop. The birds are back in town."

-- The Bard Izind, *My Stay in Westdover*

This parrot-like bird has a light, strong, porous armor plate on its chest. The popularity of the gongbird waxes and wanes among music-lovers and pet connoisseurs. For centuries, orders of monks trained these birds to ring on command, or even to follow a tune. They beat on their armored

chest with their beak, and the resonance sounds like a gong. The sound scares pests, and warns off predators. It also seems to be a form of communication with others of its species. Finally, predators leaping at a gongbird hope to avoid encountering the armor plate on the bird's chest. Adolescent gongbirds train themselves by diving headlong at each other. The defender must dodge entirely, or else try to interpose its armor plate square at the attacker. The latter, of course, results in a noisy display.

Encountered

Some zoos and traveling merchants have taken on a variety of these birds to for a musical composition. Whether part of an all animal show, or supplementing live players, the main complication that orchestrators encounter is that the creature's sounds grow deeper as the birds grow. Thus, the birds are normally trained for what ranges their parents played. This is always somewhat of a risk. Oddly enough, some rich merchants use these birds for a specialist form of target practice. The target shooting is only for experts, as a shot must be directly in the center of the gong or the bird could be injured (the Torso hit location on a winged quadruped is at no penalty; see page 552). As guard animals, they can be trained to sound whenever anyone approaches.

Industrial Uses

"The procession of the archcardinal marched by the eager crowds. Whenever someone riding was waving at the crowds, they cheered back. Between carts, there were musicians. The most unusual were those striking the chests of perched birds. It sounded like a deep gong. I wonder how they train them to sit so still? Perhaps they're stuffed." -- Parade of the Firebrands

Some farmers have been training these birds to scare crows and other pests from their orchards. Gongbirds make adequate guard animals, greeting any newcomer, be it friend or foe, with a particular sound. Music critics see bells, hubcaps, and alchemical devices in their future. Gongbirds can simplify the manufacture of magical alarm clocks and sentry items.

Adventure: For a Song

The Heroes are sent to find a bird with one key characteristic: it must make a particular note, and be able to do so for years to come. Complications in finding this elusive adult bird can include competition, chases, theft, and even chasing the bird from rooftop to rooftop.

Gongbird

Appearance: A brightly colored bird that superficially resembles a parrot, but has an armored plate on its chest.

Category: Avian.

Diet: Omnivore.

ST 4; **DX** 13; **IQ** 4; **HT** 15.

Will 10; Per 11; Speed 7; Dodge 10; Block 10; Move 3.

SM -3 (2' long) (-2 with wings unfurled); 6-8 lbs; DR 5 (torso, front only).

Traits: Flight (Winged; Air Move 14); Night Vision 1; Peripheral Vision; Piercing Cry; Stun (Link; Environment: Air); Wild (or Domestic) Animal.

Skills: Shield-14.

Giant Gongbird

ST 8; **DX** 12; **IQ** 4; **HT** 15.

Will 11; Per 12; Speed 7; Dodge 10; Block 11; Move 4.

SM -2 (3' long) (-1 with wings unfurled); 4-6 lbs; DR 2 (DR 10 torso, front only).

Humungous Gongbird

ST 12; DX 10; IQ 4; HT 15.

Will 12; Per 12; Speed 7; Dodge 10; Block 12; Move 5.

SM -1 (4.5' long) (+0 with wings unfurled); 4-6 lbs; DR 4 (DR20 torso, front only).

Glare Bug

"We were lost in the dark; our lantern had gone out. Just then, Ray spotted a glowing object moving quickly toward us. Grabbing a net, he tossed it across the path, ensnaring the object. It was revealed to be a luminescent blue beetle. The net started smoking and was becoming brittle. Jan was wearing the thickest gloves, so she grabbed the beetle, and shoved it through the open lid of an empty bull's eye lantern. A bright blue light shone out the lens, brighter than torchlight. The mission was a success, but Jan's hands needed healing from the frost burns."

-- Autobiography of Lord Daryn, *Adventuring Years*

These insects are often mistaken for a will-o-wisp, they use the light like an angler fish to attract prey insects. Similar in appearance to a large, blue firefly, these insects glow bright blue. If these creatures are kept in a box, they will lower its temperature by a number of degrees. Their body is so cold that the damage they inflict through contact is called Cold Fire. Inflicts the same damage with the same mechanics as flame, but it is cold burning.

Encountered

Nocturnal, glare bugs are a common sight around campfires and electric lights. They consume insects that are attracted to the light. They can be a nuisance for travelers, as well as people who collect moths. On the other hand, the glare bugs can be useful when they double as a light and an insect devourer.

Industrial Uses

*"Under the cover of darkness, two thieves entered the museum through the skylight. At the appointed time, the leader turned to the other and nodded, making a fishing signal with her hands. This was the signal to release a 'red herring' -- a glare bug. Once out of the bag, it composed itself, fluttered its wings, and immediately flew off toward the jewelry display, while the criminals closed in on their goal. This, of course, messed up **our** heist, already in progress."*

-- Franklin "Hacksaw" Murzin, *When Heists Collide*

The food service industry has found a few niches for this creature. Some applications include freeze-drying food, and cooling heat exchangers. While alive, these creatures can work as powerful headlights, area lighting, and semaphores. "Spent" bugs can go to feed large spiders and snakes. Giant versions are useful as powerful light sources for headlights and ships. Cold flames are not contagious, simply chilling the materials affected. Militaries seem to like the idea of a cold light that does not show up on infrared detectors. Enchanters have had success in making items to duplicate a stealth light, while researchers are furiously trying to figure out how to replicate the "cold fire" effect. The military are trying to figure out how to make cold fire weapons, as the fire cannot spread at room temperature. There has been some progress made on the construction of primitive thermopiles using the [thermoelectric effect](#).

Adventure

The heroes are hired in an unofficial capacity by a captain of an eleven border guard. It seems that orcish patrols are normally easily spotted by their huge torches and bonfires. Recently, however, some forces have been able to sneak up on his patrols and eliminate them. If pressured, he will admit that he is beginning to fear treachery in his midst. The truth is that an orc shaman is collecting and distributing glare bugs for the nearby raiders to use, for a heavy price. The success is being made known, and the price for the bugs is skyrocketing, especially as supplies grow thin. The orcs like to eat the bugs after the patrol.

Glare Bug

Appearance: A large, blue, glowing firefly.

Category: Insect.

Diet: Carnivore (Insectivore).

ST 3; DX 10; IQ 2; HT 14.

Will 11; Per 9; Speed 6; Dodge 10; Move 6.

SM -4 (16" long); 2 lbs; DR 2 (ablativ).

Traits: Affliction 1 (HT; Vision; Daze; Sense-based); Burning Attack 1 (Emanation; Always On; Cold; Living Creatures Only); Claws (Sharp); Combat Reflexes; Environmental Control 1 (Cool Only; Always On); Faz Sense (1 foot); Feature: Flashlight; Flight (Winged; Air Move 12); Peripheral Vision; Quirk (Phobia (Fire: *Pyrophobia*)); Teeth (Sharp); Wild Animal

Giant Glare Bug

ST 6; DX 9; IQ 2; HT 15.

Will 12; Per 10; Speed 6; Dodge 10; Move 6.

SM -2 (3' long); 6 lbs; DR 10 (ablativ).

Traits: As above, but Faz Sense (1 yard)

Beyond Fantasy

This article describes seven creatures, most of which could appear to physically exist in a hard-science world, even if the more wondrous aspects could not: Dolems could be robots gone loose; Combat Symbionts are simply painful, short-lived biomods; Fire Blossoms are plants that give off heat; Fanbirds can be heavy birds with powerful wings; Housegoats are meta-engineering incarnate; Gongbirds are not that unusual, with armor plates; Glare Bugs could exist as large fireflies, even if they could not emit flames, much less cold flames.

Pyramid Links

- "[Combat Golems in GURPS Technomancer](#)" by Hans-Christian Vortisch
- "[Golem Construction System for GURPS](#)" by Steven E. Ehrbar
- "[Saroo](#)" by Matt Riggsby

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