

# GURPS SPACE BESTIARY

*A Guide to Creatures of the Endless Frontier*



*By Chris McCubbin*

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

# THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL ZOO

In the outer reaches of the galaxy, life can take weird forms indeed. The *GURPS Space Bestiary* presents over 300 extraterrestrial creatures for the science fiction roleplaying campaign.

In addition to strange and dangerous variations on earthly animals, this book contains examples of silicon life, crystalline creatures, energy and liquid beings, vacuum dwellers and many more bizarre lifeforms.



Inside you'll find fierce predators, treacherous trappers, gigantic herd beasts, carnivorous plants, scientific curiosities and valuable rarities. All are completely defined and cross-referenced to make it easy for the Game Master to pick just the right creatures to populate his campaign world . . . and there are over 100 detailed illustrations.

The creatures are organized according to habitat, including every earth-type environment, plus interstellar space and other exotic, hostile places where man could never survive. There is even a special section on the pets and domestic animals of a spacefaring society!

The *Space Bestiary* isn't just for GMs running a *GURPS Space* campaign. A fantasy, horror or post-holocaust game needs strange monsters too. And some of the nastier beasts can even challenge a team of supers!

Also included is advice for the GM who wants to create his *own* creatures — features to emphasize, creative ways to let the beasts interact with the PCs, and hints for devising ecologically sound and believable animals — and a bibliography of science fiction source material.

Written by Chris W. McCubbin  
Edited by Michael Hurst  
Cover by Bob Eggleton  
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**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

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# **GURPS<sup>®</sup>** **SPACE BESTIARY**

*A Collection of Creatures from Around the Universe*

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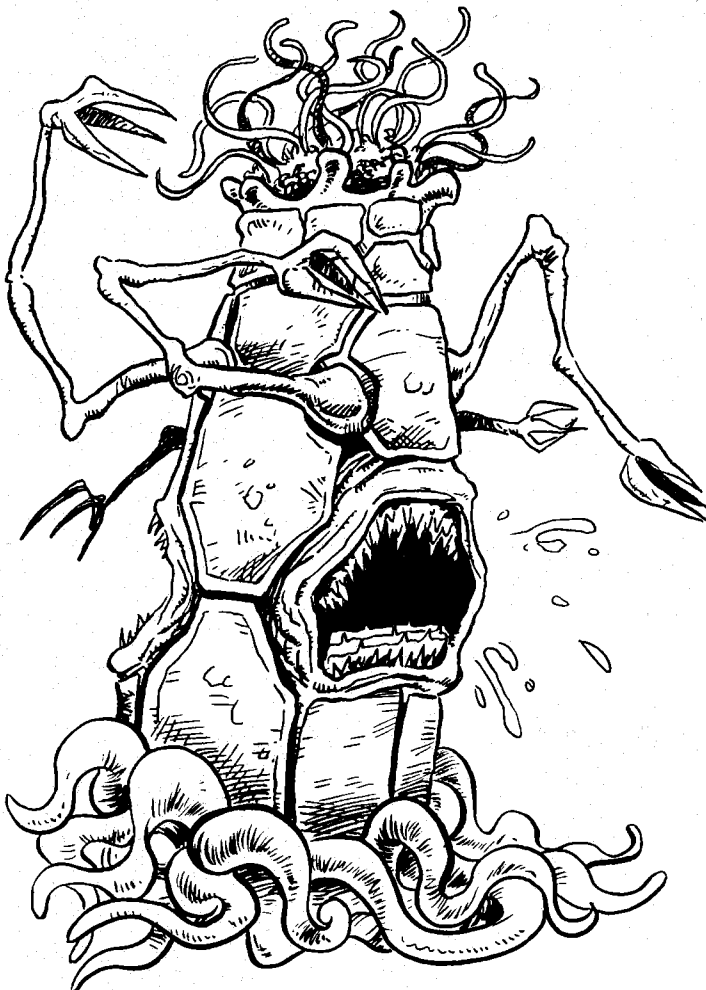
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## Korreath

**ST:** 10-40    **Speed/Dodge:** 25/8    **Size:** 2-5  
**DX:** 15    **PD/DR:** 4/4    **Weight:** 40-300 lbs.  
**IQ:** 3    **Damage:** \*    **Habitat:** M  
**HT:** 15/20-45    **Reach:** C, 1

Korreaths are the real-world versions of the legendary phoenix. These large, pterodactyl-like avians can burst into flame at will. The creature's skin is moist and flame retardant. It secretes a flammable "sweat," then ignites the liquid with a spark created by grinding its iron-concentrating beak. The flame burns for up to five minutes and does not harm the korreath in any way. A korreath can set itself on fire up to three times a day.

Korreaths live in the rocky cliffs of steep mountains, preying upon other local animals. A korreath will not hesitate to attack a creature up to half again its size. They attack with their claws and beak for 1d+1 cutting, and also ignite themselves and wrap their flaming wings around the prey, doing an additional 1d-1 fire damage/turn.

Korreaths only use their flame when attacking particularly tough prey (including humans) or to impress the opposite sex during the mating season. Mating season lasts a month; both sexes can set themselves aflame. Any animal attacked by a burning korreath must make a DX-5 roll to escape. Any flammable clothes or equipment on an enveloped character will catch fire.

## Leaper

**ST:** 13    **Speed/Dodge:** 24/12    **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 18    **PD/DR:** 0/0    **Weight:** 75 lbs.  
**IQ:** 5    **Damage:** 1d-3 cut    **Habitat:** M  
**HT:** 15/8    **Reach:** C

These mountainside herd animals are easily able to leap 10- or 15-yard chasms. They often take a short-cut down a 50- or 60-foot cliff by simply jumping over the edge. Leapers are difficult to stalk or surprise — they have a natural Alertness of 13. Because of their speed, agility and ability to recognize danger, they're considered one of the galaxy's most challenging game animals by hunters. Leapers are customarily hunted with old-fashioned, medium-caliber, single-shot, projectile hunting rifles. To bag a leaper buck with such an archaic weapon is considered a remarkable feather in a sportsman's cap.

Leapers are found in small herds of 5 to 10 individuals; usually there are several does and a single buck. Young bucks without a harem are also often found roaming alone, while they wait to establish a herd. They are long-legged creatures, completely covered with shaggy green fur. They have three eyes, three nostrils, and triangular, three-lipped mouths. If cornered, a leaper will attack by lashing out with its sharp hooves.

## Long Arm

See *Subterranean* (p. 82).

## Mountain Animals



## Magma Worm

**ST:** 20    **Speed/Dodge:** 4/5    **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 10    **PD/DR:** 4/4    **Weight:** 400 lbs.  
**IQ:** 1    **Damage:** 3d\*    **Habitats:** M, Sub  
**HT:** 12/16    **Reach:** C, 1-2

Magma worms are silicon-based creatures that frolic playfully in the lava pools of active volcanoes. After an eruption, their frozen corpses can be found for miles along the paths of the lava flows. Any number of research facilities would love to keep a living worm for research, but the problems of capturing and transporting samples are almost insurmountable. Anyone actually touching a magma worm takes 3d heat damage; damage is 2d out to 3 feet and 1d out to 6 feet. Magma worms normally glow the vivid red of living lava.

## Miasma

See *Plains* (p. 68).

## Mingler

See *Plains* (p. 68).

## Mountain Giant

**ST:** 200    **Speed/Dodge:** 4/0    **Size:** 4  
**DX:** 6    **PD/DR:** 6/18    **Weight:** 12 tons  
**IQ:** 3    **Damage:** 4d cr    **Habitat:** M  
**HT:** 18/300    **Reach:** C

The largest-known, mobile silicon life-forms, mountain giants resemble headless stone colossi 10 feet tall. They are stupid, sluggish rock-eaters, and won't even notice carbon-based creatures, unless they're both powerful and foolish enough to seriously threaten the giant. Mountain giants do like things quiet and peaceful, and any major construction or excavation will eventually drive the local mountain giants into a rage. They are solitary creatures, and normally don't approach within a mile of one another, except when mating. A mountain giant can live more than a millennium.

# 12 VACUUM DWELLERS

## Antimatter Swarm

**ST:** 10      **Speed/Dodge:** -/5      **Size:** 1  
**DX:** 11      **PD/DR:** 0/0      **Weight:** 40 lbs.  
**IQ:** 2      **Damage:** \*      **Habitat:** V  
**HT:** 13      **Reach:** C

The most feared navigational hazards in the galaxy, the antimatter swarms are primitive, sub-light vacuum breathers composed entirely of anti-matter. They are invariably found in packs of 4d individuals. Visually, antimatter swarms resemble phosphorescent boulders, with no outward features. Contact with any antimatter swarm will be enough to utterly annihilate even the largest interstellar ships. Fortunately, these creatures are quite rare and are almost never found inside a stellar system. The patrol offers a bounty of \$200,000 for each confirmed, new sighting of an antimatter swarm. The swarm is then destroyed, using a flight of drones to trigger the matter/antimatter reaction.

## Bio-Planetoid

**ST:** —      **Speed/Dodge:** 0/0      **Size:** 10-1,000 miles  
**DX:** —      **PD/DR:** 6/1,000      **Weight:** millions of ktons  
**IQ:** 3-9      **Damage:** —      **Habitat:** V  
**HT:** 25/100,000+      **Reach:** —

Bio-planetoids are the evolutionary step immediately preceding sentient worlds. They present a remarkable range of size and IQ (however, there seems to be no direct correlation between size and intelligence in either direction).

Bio-planetoids live about 10,000 years. They reproduce just once, producing 7 to 12 young. The young are extremely mobile, capable of telekinetically accelerating themselves to just under lightspeed. At birth, bio-planetoid young are spherical, 200 to 300 feet in circumference. After birth, they set off for another system containing bio-planetoids (they seem to possess this knowledge instinctively), going into a state of suspended animation once they reach full acceleration. Once they reach their destination, they mate.

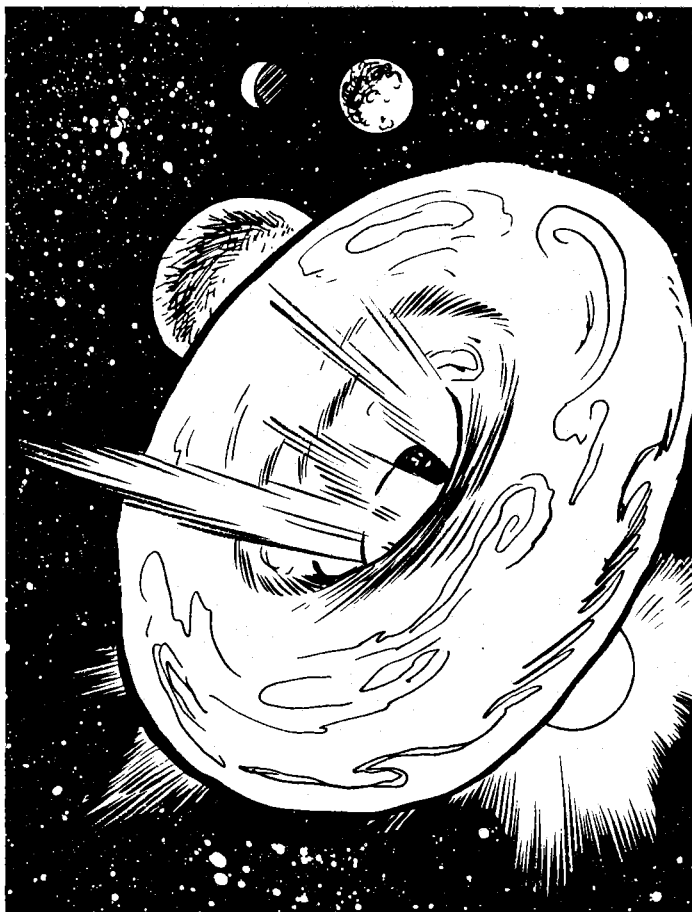
Bio-planetoids are ambisexual, and any two can reproduce. They only mate during early life. They often find other proto-planetoids waiting when they're born, and impregnate these before they start their journey. Once they arrive, they are themselves impregnated by the first non-

sibling proto-planetoid to arrive. Once impregnated, they assume their life-orbit. Over the next century they grow rapidly, losing their capacity for independent movement and assuming a toroidal shape. Sometimes a bio-planetoid (or several) will occupy an empty orbit in the system, but they're most often found orbiting gas giants.

Their young are born after a gestation period of about 3,000 years, at which time the planetoid stops growing. At death the planetoid begins to break up, decaying entirely after about 100,000 years.

They appear to need no sustenance other than stellar radiation and other ambient energies.

Most bio-planetoids are completely indifferent to smaller creatures on their surface, though a few of the more intelligent have evidenced curiosity, particularly when confronted by a powerful telepath. Psionic communication with the planetoids is trying, however, since their minds work exceedingly slowly.



*Bio-Planetoid*

## Bio-Ship

**ST:** 2,000      **Speed/Dodge:** -/0      **Size:** 10,000+  
**DX:** 25      **PD/DR:** 6/30      **Weight:** 5 ktons  
**IQ:** 5      **Damage:** 25d cr      **Habitat:** V  
**HT:** 25/500      **Reach:** C

# 15 DO-IT-YOURSELF CREATURES

This book should contain enough vicious creatures for several years of dedicated *GURPS Space* campaigning, but against the day when this well does run dry . . . or when the GM just can't find *quite* the right creature to send against the PCs, here are a few tips on designing custom space creatures.

## The Place of Monsters

Non-intelligent monsters definitely have a place in science fiction gaming — the pulps and the comics are particularly rife with bug-eyed monsters from the stars, and contemporary SF remains fascinated with how life might evolve on other worlds. However, monsters are much less important in SF than they are in fantasy.

The reasons for this are obvious: a big, mean creature is much less of a danger to adventurers with energy weapons and powered combat armor. Even if the beast is six stories high and breathes fire, it would still have little chance of survival if even a small space ship landed on top of it.

Space monsters tend to be the most important in a Survey or colonial campaign (and a few other potential variants, such as big-game hunting). The reasons for this are two-fold. First, such campaigns involve primitive, untamed worlds, where the big beasts heretofore ruled unchallenged. Second, neither Survey Scouts nor colonists commonly go heavily armed. They have other things on their minds than mayhem, such as furthering the cause of science or carving a home out of the wilderness. Both will have weapons and know how to use them, but their arsenal will be of a scale to give the beasts a better chance.

Space beasts pop up in other sorts of campaigns, but usually as subplots, local color or brief encounters. Of course, it is possible to design a sub-sentient race powerful enough to give, not only a party of adventurers, but a whole ultra-tech race a run for their money (see *Invader Swarm* and *Laser Storm*, p. 87, for menaces potent enough to build a whole adventure around).

## Making Monsters

Designing monsters is one of the GM's easier tasks. The wonderful thing about monsters is that they do not have to be balanced, in the sense that everything they do and are has a positive or negative point value that has to be juggled to come up with a certain total. The GM just fills in the blanks and, presto! Instant monsters.

They do, however, have to make sense. A big help in designing alien creatures is the sample animals found on p. B141-145, or the *GURPS Bestiary*, which gives hundreds of species from the real world or folklore. An animal's stats will

probably tend to follow certain proportions no matter what planet it's from. A 15 pound creature is unlikely to have a ST of 20+. Of course, the nice thing about fantastic fiction is that anything can happen (the little creature is made out of super-strong organic tungsten for instance). But extremely odd sets of stats need some justification, no matter how pseudo-scientific.

Speaking of science, it does not take a PhD in ecology to design a space monster, but the game will be much more satisfying for the players and the GM if the creature fills a necessary ecological niche in his homeworld, and if the GM knows what that niche is. It does not take much to put a creature in some kind of plausible context — “the tungsten beast is a rock-eater, preferring to dine on stones with a high iron content. It's found in the mountains and in rocky wilderness. It has a very low birth rate, so it needs to be tough enough to defend itself against all would-be predators.”

The creature's ecological role will make it much easier to define its “personality” — how it reacts in a given situation — “the tungsten beast is a slow and placid creature. It will often completely ignore something that's trying to eat it, relying on its natural toughness for protection. If it actually takes damage, however, it will go into a berserk rage, mopping the floor with its attacker and anything else unfortunate enough to be in the neighborhood.”

Of course, science doesn't know everything, and a truly realistic campaign will pose some riddles that have no answers. Remember, for years all the best engineers *knew* that the bumblebee couldn't fly.

## The Shortcut

If the GM needs a completely new creature in a hurry, there is an extremely convenient shortcut, based on the fact that, in *GURPS*, *species is a special effect*. A copy of the *Bestiary* is a great help here.

Here's how it works. Suppose the GM decides the adventure is going too slowly (or too smoothly) for the party, and decides an impromptu animal encounter is what's required to liven things up (or soften up the PCs). He surveys his party's size, experience and armament, and decides that the equivalent of about six sabertooth tigers would serve to slow the party down with little chance of a massacre. The GM turns to the *Sabertooth Tiger* specs in the *Bestiary*, but tells the party they're being jumped by six large, purple lizards. They'll never know the difference.

If the party slaughter their way through the purple lizards with too much dispatch, the GM can try tyrannosauri. If the adventurers are still too facile at monster killing, it is probably time to ring in a variation (see *Space Monster Surprise*, p. 105).



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## GLOSSARY

**Amorphous** — shapeless or without definite form.  
**Arboreal** — living in trees.  
**Barnacles** — any of several marine crustaceans that form a hard shell and attach themselves to the hulls of ships; by extension, any life form of similar habits.  
**Calcareous** — chalky (literally, made of or resembling calcium carbonate, calcium or limestone).  
**Carbonized** — partially converted to carbon, usually by burning.  
**Carnivore** — an animal with a diet principally composed of other animals.  
**Cephalopod** — animals with a soft exterior and prehensile tentacles, such as the octopus.  
**Cetacean** — a fishlike, aquatic mammal, such as a whale; by extension, whale-like animals.

**Diurnal** — an animal having most of its activity during the hours of daylight.  
**Estivate** — passing the summer, hot season or drought conditions in a state of dormancy; the complement to hibernate (see below).  
**Herbivore** — an animal with a diet composed mostly of plants.  
**Hibernate** — to spend the winter or cold season in a state of dormancy; the complement of estivate (see above).  
**Nocturnal** — an animal having most of its activity during the hours of darkness.  
**Omnivore** — an animal with a diet composed of both plants and other animals.  
**Panimmune** — a treatment or medication that gives immunity to all, or at least most, diseases.  
**Parthenogenetic** — self-fertilizing; able to reproduce without the necessity of conjunction with another sex.  
**Pinniped** — an aquatic mammal having finlike flippers, such as a seal; by extension, similar animals.

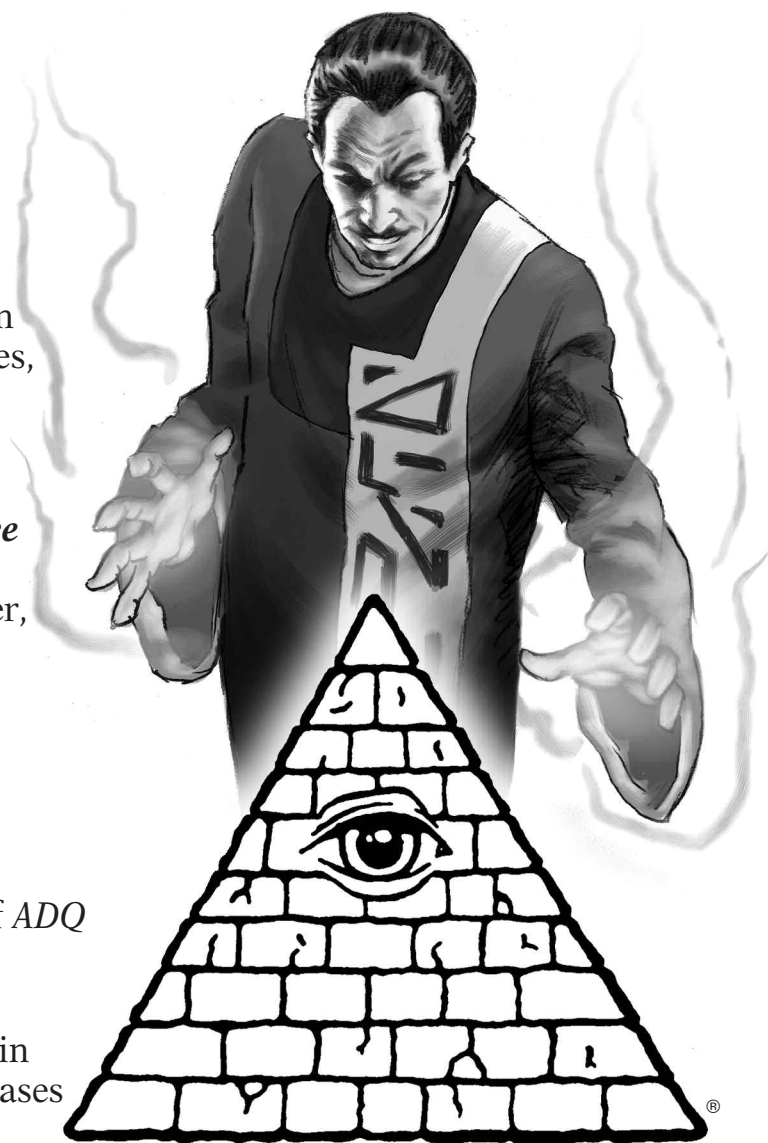
**Ruminant** — a cud-chewing grazer, such as the cow.  
**Sessile** — a creature that is permanently attached rather than free moving.  
**Sexual dimorphism** — the degree of physical difference between the sexes of the same species; it can be almost imperceptible or so great that outside observers have difficulty in believing that the sexes are of the same species.  
**Siliceous** — composed of or based on silicon.  
**Spiracle** — an aperture or opening for admitting or expelling air.  
**Symbiont** — one of the organisms in a symbiotic relationship; this is usually a very close relationship from which both parties derive benefit; symbiote is a variant form of symbiont.  
**Tons displaced** — the amount of fluid displaced by a ship when it is afloat; usually quoted as equivalent to the ship's weight.  
**Undulation** — moving with a wavelike motion.

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