



PREVIEW

**Beasts, not monsters. Think outside the monster handbook. Go beyond the zoo.**

Many of our favorite fantasy worlds in film and fiction have one thing in common: you rarely see real-world animals. (Never simply a raccoon in the space station's garbage compactor! No mere horses that we'll ride to the vulture-dragon-things' castle!) These strange animals are not usually adversaries for our heroes, so we're not going to fill a chapter with stats for all these little things. But they do contribute a great deal to the sense that we are truly in an alien world, so the idea is worth a short discussion.

Overlight is a *weird* setting. And with seven different shards, each with their many and varied biomes, landscapes, cultures, and people, it seems a disservice to populate it with dogs and rats and cats. It's your game of course! If you want stray dogs roaming the streets of Haark, go for it. But we encourage you to take a bit of time to manipulate classic animal tropes and create some of your own background creatures for the setting. Here's a few tips and examples.

*Keep it real.* The beasts of Overlight are more akin to bizarre and wondrous animals than to the monsters out of classic fantasy. In fact, our use of the word "beast" instead of "monster" is very deliberate. Make your

beasts fabulous animals. Have a need for a dragon-like creature? Consider using a real-world monitor lizard or even prehistoric reptile as your blueprint to build a beast upon. Texts on modern extinctions, Paleolithic megafauna, and tetrapod zoology are all wonderful resources for inspiration. Your beasts should still feel like *animals*. Dangerous, strange, exotic, almost magical animals, yes — but still animals. Always ask yourself, “What would this animal be doing if it weren’t interrupted by a group of meddling Skyborn?”

*Beasts should be chimerical.* One of the easiest ways to accomplish this feeling is simply by smashing together a few real-world animal traits. Does one of your Scenes require a rabbit? Give the rabbit curved ram’s horns and reflective cat’s eyes. Give it an unusual behavior (borrowed from another real-world animal) ... let’s say it’s a scavenger that eats trash. Call it a Junk Thumper and have the things be like so many pests running around the gutters of the Great Market of Haark. Just like that, you’ve got a bit of background detail that you can infuse into appropriate Scenes for the rest of your Campaign.

*The Overlight infuses everything.* While the Skyborn excel at manipulating them, mystical powers and even Chroma-like effects can be used by other beings. (See “What Are the Chroma?” in *Chapter 1: Introduction*, p. X.) What would be an unusual behavior in the real world could be a nearly miraculous Overlight-fueled power in this setting. When in doubt, add intense, almost neon color which may be tied to a Virtue. A little goes a long way, and not every critter needs something, but maybe our Junk Thumper thumps one of its big hind feet — not just in warning to other Junk Thumpers but to create a visible orange ripple in the air, the sound of which unnaturally bounces off surfaces and sonically obfuscates the animal’s hasty retreat.

Here are a few more examples of real-world animals or ecological niches made more *Overlight-y*:

- Instead of feral dog packs on the streets of Haark, let’s keep them as dogs but give them a hide of patchy fur intermixed with scales like a lizard, especially on the face. Maybe a leathery wattle or crest. And a forked tongue too, which they use to scent their prey like a reptilian bloodhound. No howls from these dogs, who are completely silent except when excited by the prospect of a fresh kill. When this happens, the entire pack will rattle their scaled and hairless tails.
- We’ve mentioned the Yakirin of Zenith in passing. We imagine them to be the size and shape of yaks or Highland cattle. They have long blue-black fur and barbels sprouting from their snouts like a carp or Chinese dragon would have. Their horns split and branch to look more like strange antlers. The Monks of Zenith breed them for their milk, which is high in fat, and their flesh, which is prized by the Hamanu.



- Here's an easy one: pterodactyls. Overlight *begs* to have pterodactyls. There was a lot of variation in real-world pterosaurs, so let's start with one of the big iconic species like *Pteranodon longiceps*, but even bigger — let's say, just big enough for a man to ride. And give the thing tiger stripes in bright, almost neon shades of blue and deep red. They're still fish eaters, but what if they dove down into the Sea Beneath to catch their prey? And what if this unusual behavior means they are viewed either as omens of doom or as near-holy beings that exist in the space between life and death?

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