

TALES FROM THE WOOD



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INTRODUCTION

The Wood
*a place where animals live, love, fight
and die.*

What is a role-playing game?

I would imagine that if you bought this product, you already know what a role-playing game is and what role-playing is all about. If you haven't role-played before, then I am honoured that you chose Tales from The Wood (TfTW) to be your first.

Role playing means different things to different people. At its heart it is a combination of storytelling, improvisational theatre, a game of make-believe or even a tactical wargame. Some role-playing games emphasize one aspect more than another and in some one or more aspects are virtually absent. TfTW is mainly a game of storytelling and make-believe.

One thing that is essentially true is that all players except one take the role of a character in the game and, within the framework of the game, play the role of their characters by narrating and describing what they are doing in response to what is going on within the story. One player has a different role and is called The Gamekeeper (GK). We'll come back to that later.

What is Tales from The Wood?

TfTW is what you and your players want it to be. It is a framework of rules for building your own fantasy story of adventure, fun, tragedy and excitement. Whether you choose to tell a tale of epic quests, great journeys and grand adventure or whether you prefer to weave a story based on relationships and the love of home and family, these rules will help you to do that. However, there is the backdrop of *The Wood* that will permeate all of your tales and all of the stories you tell will ultimately be affected by *The Wood* and its many inhabitants.

What do you need to play?

You need some players and a place to play. The former is easy, just grab a few friends and tell them about this great game you just found. The next may not be as easy, but as long as you have a room and a places to sit and be comfortable, you are away.

Next you need dice (TfTW uses ten-sided and six-sided dice called d10 and d6 respectively), preferably one of each type for each player, and a photocopy of the character sheet for each player. Finally, you need pencils and probably erasers too. Oh, don't forget a few drinks and snacks.

The player's role

TfTW is an unusual role-playing game. It takes its inspiration from animal stories, like *Watership Down* and *Duncton Wood*, so the characters in this game are all animals. You are therefore playing the roles of creatures that can typically be found in and around the British woodland; animals such as Mouse, Rabbit, Vole, Squirrel and Hedgehog.

You need to come up with some interesting characters drawn from the thirteen species of animal available to you, called the *Creatures of The Way*. Through your characters, you must live your lives in *The Wood*, react to things that happen to you and your friends and, for the length of the game session, play the role of the characters you are portraying. Remember that you are helping to create a Tale. This is a co-operative thing. There are no winners and losers. The better you respect each others characters and their part in the overall Tale, the better the game experience will be. Even the Gamekeeper is your friend in this, although her role is different to yours. It may seem like she is trying to 'get' you, but that's not the case. She is trying to create scenes that will engage you and keep your interest and sometimes these will threaten you or scare you. Occasionally there will be a tragedy too, but this is normally only with the player's blessing and where it helps to





weave an interesting and exciting Tale.

It may seem difficult to know how to play the role of a mouse or a frog or whatever. However, we have found in play testing that generally players will pick a creature that they already have some knowledge of and that often helps to define the way that they play their characters.

There is some help for you later on in these rules but it is certainly recommended that you are familiar with at least one of the novels listed at the end of this publication.

The creatures do have their own individual abilities - Mouse for example is extremely acrobatic, Hedgehog is tough and good in a fight, Mole can dig tunnels etc. and this helps you to get a 'handle' on your character. That doesn't mean that all rabbits have to cower away and all hedgehogs have to be awkward and stupid. You can put whatever personality on your character that you like and an aggressive rabbit or wise old hedgehog would be great fun to play.

The Gamekeeper's role

The game is coordinated by one of the players who has a different role to play in the game. She is usually referred to in games of this type as the Gamesmaster or referee. In keeping with the setting the referee in TtTW is called the *Gamekeeper* (GK). The GK has to spend time prior to an evenings' gaming preparing the adventure or scenario, called *The Tale*, deciding beforehand what the PC's are trying to achieve and deciding what obstacles and help they will have along the way, be they natural, Man-made, of *The Bane*, or other creatures. The GK will also play the role of any creatures the PC's meet whether they are friendly, neutral or otherwise.

Whilst the GK may have set very clear goals for the players, the way they reach those goals may differ radically from those the GK had in mind. The GK therefore needs to be flexible and ready to ad-lib, or change direction partway through the Tale if the players start to do things that she hadn't accounted for or written down (rest assured, they will).

THE TALE

*Hello, my name is Grizzlegruff. I am a Gnome, and it falls upon me to recount this Tale. I am not a natural storyteller as was my good friend Oakfellow, who would be chronicling this tale but for the fact that he disappeared recently and to date we have had no luck in finding him. I therefore dedicate this Tale to him, and to the memory of all the many creatures who live, love, fight and die in **The Wood**.*

*Where does one start with a Tale of this magnitude? With *The Wood* itself perhaps? Yes that is most appropriate, *The Wood*. You should understand that *The Wood* is more than merely a home for the many hundreds of animals, birds, insects and other lowlier forms of life. It is a living, breathing and feeling entity. The Woods' vitality is reflected in the health of its inhabitants and their health is good for *The Wood*. When *The Wood* suffers, we all suffer. Our relationship is linked, symbiotic. We need *The Wood*, *The Wood* needs us. We creatures who understand this relationship and seek to perpetuate and maintain this balance are followers of what has become known as **The Way of The Wood** or more simply **The Way**.*

*Through the ages there have been others who have sought to upset this harmony, thinking in their own warped mentality that somehow such an imbalance could be worked to their own advantage. This perversion of *The Way* is known as **The Bane**. Some creatures are more susceptible to its evil design than others. These misguided creatures are the rats, the weasels, the crows and the adders amongst others, but perhaps we should not blame them entirely for we believe that Man is by far the worst culprit and surely it is from Man that *The Bane* was first born?*

*When one talks of *The Wood*, it is generally accepted that one means the whole of the environs of *The Wood*, not only the **Brightwood** wherein grow the mighty Oak, the Ash, the Elm and the Yew and where dwell Mouse and Squirrel and Shrew and Mole who love its sun dappled grasses and quiet glades and the comforting fastness of the tall trees. No, one also talks of the **Tanglebriars**, that dark shadowy region of thorn and thistle, ancient and brooding wherein live the weasels and stoats and adders and crows gathering in their twisted cabals and ever ready to pounce upon the hapless intruder.*

*Then there is the **Frogmarsh**, a largely open tract and from where, at night time, one can often hear the strange song of the **Frog Lord** and his minions drifting eerily around *The Wood*. That the Frogmarsh remains wet and misty is attributed to **The River** which splits *The Wood* and after twisting its way between the boles of the mighty trees spills out to feed the Frogmarsh before it gathers itself together again and continues its course to the lands of Man and beyond.*

*Many creatures thrive on, or in, *The River* including of course Water Vole and Otter, but not forgetting that Pike is ever present and ready to pounce from*





*the reeds which border **The Deep Pond**. Let me not neglect **The Meadows** bordering onto **The Wood**. This place of course is home to many animals, but most particularly to that most wary of creatures, **Rabbit** with her vast network of warrens creating a labyrinth in which one such as I without the **Lore** to navigate those twisting tunnels could (and have) become hopelessly lost. Unfortunately for poor **Rabbit** this does provide the ideal hunting ground for stoats and weasels when they venture from the **Tanglebriars** on their nightly forays.*

The players can always be steered back on course further along the line later on in the game if needs be. It is all part of the GK's responsibilities to be flexible enough to see what the PC's want to do and adapt her version of the Tale according to the player's wishes. At the end of the day, whilst the Tale is important, it is not as important as the characters who are telling it.

The role of the dice

Most of the actions performed by player-creatures (PC's) in TftW are normal everyday activities where the players simply tells the GK what their characters intend to do and the GK simply relates to the players what happens as a result. However, because life in *The Wood* is not always that simple there will be times when the GK will call for a dice to be rolled to determine whether an intended action was successful or not. This is often the case when external conditions could affect the outcome of what seemed to be a simple task, or when another creature is trying to stop the PC from succeeding. Be careful with the use of the dice in the telling of the Tale - use them sparingly and at dramatic moments when the fate of the creature is in the balance. Don't let the dice and the rules get in the way of enjoyment and the telling of a good story.

The dice used in TftW are six-sided (d6) and ten-sided (d10). When the action calls for the player to roll a dice the GK will advise that type of dice to be rolled. Normally the characteristics of the creature itself will determine which dice is to be used - if the creature has the appropriate Ability (or Lore)

then a d10 is rolled and if the creature does not have the appropriate Ability then a d6 is rolled. There are essentially two types of action in TftW - uncontested actions and contested actions and the differences are explained later in these rules.

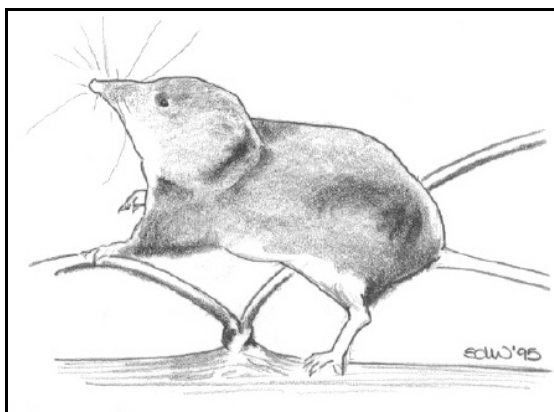




CREATING A PLAYER CREATURE

Choosing a creature

The first step for you is to decide which of the various animals that you would like to role-play. You should generally take the role of one of the followers of *The Way of The Wood*, as many of the scenarios are to do with coming into combating *The Bane* in some way. Your GK could allow you to play a different creature, especially if you have a particular favourite and you come up with a good reason with the creature to be allied with the other PC's. You should be aware though that your GK may disallow it as many of the creatures of *The Bane* are predatory and they can be very much more powerful than the PC's. If you want a creature just because it is tougher than the other PC's without a good story to go with it, then your GK is likely to disallow it straight away.



All the same species

As an alternative, the GK could run a game where all of the PC's are of the same species. You could all be moles for example, as in the Duncton Wood novels, or all squirrels as in the novels of Michael Tod, in which case the GK will let you know her preferences at the outset.

The GK might even state that she wants all characters to be of the same type, but then leave it up to you as a group as to which species you choose.

Let the players choose

Assuming the choice is a free one there are thirteen creatures for players to choose from.

The creatures described are generic for their type, for instance there are four species of mouse in the British Isles and whilst they do vary slightly the differences are not so great as to warrant four separate descriptions.

The variety of creatures within a given species can be handled by giving them different *Lores*. The *Lores* are described in detail later, but for example you could choose Wood Lore for your Mouse character and that would make him a Wood Mouse. Someone else could have a Mouse character with Field Lore, making him a Field or Harvest Mouse and so on.

You should bear in mind that all of the rules for animal Traits, Abilities and *Lores* are subjective and although they have been thoroughly researched and play-tested there is nothing that cannot be altered or changed if there is anything with which you disagree. If a

favourite animal is not listed then there are guidelines in the Gamekeeper Section of these rules to assist in the creation of additional creatures for use in TftW.

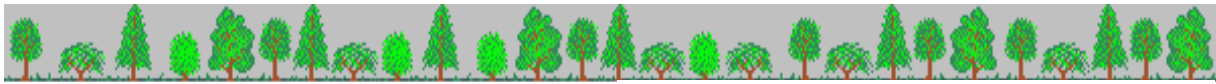
Creature Characteristics

PC's in TftW are defined by the use of *Traits*, *Abilities* and *Lores*. These characteristics describe something about the creature in simple numerical terms so that players can gauge their character's relative strengths and weaknesses.

Traits

There are six traits in TftW and these are as follows :-Toughness, Sturdiness, Nimble-





ness, Craftiness, Fierceness and Alertness. Traits are measured in numerical values. The higher the value of the trait the more able the creature is in performing tasks associated with that trait.

A quick reference to the *Player Creature Table* will show the strength of some creatures compared to others as well as their weaknesses. Mouse for example is clearly the most nimble creature but not at all tough or sturdy. Traits are important because they govern the use of the various abilities of the creatures. The Trait value is added to the roll of the dice to determine whether the animal has succeeded in an action or not.

Description of the Traits

Toughness (TO): This trait represents the sheer brute strength of the creature. Whilst size is the primary consideration, other things are taken into account, for example the strong fore-paws of Mole. Toughness is used to determine what an animal can move or carry/drag, as well as the power it can get into a bite or claw attack.

Sturdiness (ST): Sturdiness is again a measure of the size of the animal. However, it also represents the bulk and relative constitution of the animal. It helps in recovering from the effects of poisons/toxins, resisting disease and shrugging off physical punishment (particularly in *Tooth and Claw*).

Nimbleness (NI): This is the trait that represents the creature's speed, agility and quickness. Its use is mainly for determining such activities as climbing, leaping and fleeing. Small creatures tend to be more nimble than large ones.

Craftiness (CR): General cunning, wit and intelligence are encompassed within this trait. Usually, it is the predators who are the craftiest of the creatures in *The Wood*. It sees most use when using the various Lores.

Fierceness (FI): This represents the animal's combative ability and natural predatory instinct, as well as natural willingness to fight, kill and hunt. Carnivorous creatures obviously tend to have higher values than herbivores. A low value is indicative of timidity.

Alertness (AL): Alertness measures the overall perception and wariness of the creature. It takes into account all of the senses and includes '6th Sense'. Note that most creatures make up for the lack or poor ability in one of their senses by having heightened abilities in other senses (e.g. Mole is virtually blind but he has a very keen sense of smell/touch).

Higher Traits

Players can raise their creatures' Traits above the starting values by spending 'experience' points earned on adventures. The only limit is that in the case of Toughness and Sturdiness there are maximum values (listed in brackets on the *Player Creature Table*). The reason there are maximum values for these Traits is that these are largely determined by the actual size of the creature and therefore there is a natural limit on how tough or sturdy a creature can be.

The Governing Trait

Each Ability (see below) has a Trait which governs its use, called the *Governing Trait*. When rolling the dice to attempt to do something, the value of the creature's Governing Trait is added to the dice roll.

Abilities

Abilities are the natural 'skills' of the creatures in *The Wood*. Animals paws do not enable them to manipulate things very well so there are things that they can't do. Squirrel can hold a nut or a berry to eat it, but she can't tie a piece of string to a stick. Therefore player creatures are limited to a selection of tasks and aside from these Abilities, they have no 'skills' as such. A creature can attempt any of the abilities on this list. If the creature has the Ability then the player rolls a d10 whenever the ability is used. If not, then a d6 is rolled. The only exceptions are Fly and Wisdom.

It sounds obvious, but has to be stated that only creatures that can actually fly have the Fly Ability. No other creature may choose to Fly. Wisdom is the province of the owl.





Creatures may learn it but the cost is double the points cost of other abilities. In addition the ability needs to be taught by some-creature who already has Wisdom and is willing to take on a student.

Description of Abilities

Climb (NI): The measure of how well a creature can cling to vertical or near-vertical surfaces and move around on those surfaces (cliff faces, walls, fences, trees etc.) as well as a measure of the animal's intrinsic balance (moving along tops of walls, branches etc.). The difficulty level will be affected by such factors as the slipperiness of the surface being climbed, weather conditions, speed of ascent etc. It would normally be an uncontested roll.

Flee (NI): This is the ability of the animal to avoid a pursuer, often by virtue of the animal's small size. Speed, reactions and use of terrain features and cover are also handy. Flee can also be used in Tooth & Claw, substituting this ability in an attempt to get away from an attacker. Flee is used only in contested situations.

Fly (NI): Only creatures that can actually fly can use this ability (birds, bats). The Fly ability can be used uncontested, weather conditions having the most effect upon the difficulty level. It can also be used contested if the creature is in a chase or race situation.

Hide (NI): The ability of the creature to blend with and use cover and camouflage of *The Wood* remain undetected. Usually used as an contested task verses a pursuer's Track ability.

Intimidate (FI): Used to frighten other creatures or to gain an edge in Tooth & Claw situations. It is used in contested rolls only. An equal result is a standoff (a lot of growling or bluster, but with no-creature actually frightening the other) but a result in favour of one intimidator over another will mean that the loser is so terrified (or simply surprised/shocked) that it loses one round where it cannot do anything. In Tooth & Claw this could mean that a creature is defenceless and the winner gets a free bite or blow, or that

the creature can make good his brief advantage to escape from a much larger opponent. In non-Tooth & Claw situations the result could indicate much more of a willingness to cooperate or the loser otherwise backing down from his or her original standpoint.

Leap (NI): The ability of a creature to jump to great heights from the ground or across wide gaps, such as when Squirrel leaps from the branch of one tree to another. The use of the ability will be affected by adverse weather conditions, slippery take off and/or landing etc. and will mainly be used in uncontested situations.

Swim (NI): The ability of a creature to keep afloat in water and move in the direction it wishes. In contested situations it is also used to determine the quickest swimmer. Some creatures (Otter, Water Vole etc) may also use the ability for moving about freely underwater. The Task Difficulty will be affected by such factors as the speed of the current, rapids, weather conditions etc.

Tooth & Claw (FI): The natural fighting ability of the creature. This ability is described in its own section later in these rules.

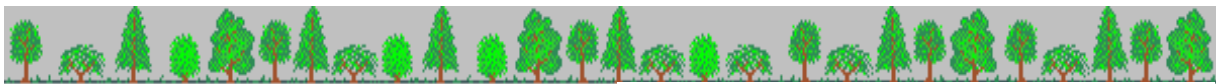
Track (AL): Using mainly the senses of smell, sight and hearing the animal uses this ability to trail other creatures and to seek out hidden prey. The difficulty will be affected by adverse weather, the prey crossing water, delay in picking up the scent etc.

Lores

Lores are a combination of instinctive and learned knowledge of the habitat in which the creature normally dwells. A successful Lore check will tell you about the creatures that are usually to be found in that location, where they live and so on. It will also tell you about the geography and features of the terrain and other useful information about the area. As such, all creatures will have at least one Lore appropriate to the creature's normal habitat.

Where the *Player Creature Table* includes a specific Lore, it is because that creature is normally found in the habitat indicated by the Lore. Where the Lore is not specified or





there is a choice of Lores then it is because there are a variety of different types within that species or that the creature can be found in a range of locations (birds for example fly far and wide).

Description of Lores

Beach Lore (CR): A rare lore in TftW but nevertheless included for completeness, Beach Lore would be used to know when the

BEYOND THE WOOD

*Of the region beyond the Meadow I will say little. Suffice to say that the Meadow is bounded by a wall built by Man and beyond that is the **Rookery**, a line of trees that form a home to masses of evil-hearted rooks and crows, waiting to peck out the eyes of an unwary fool. This line of trees hides the **Farm**. I'll say no more of that other than to mention the dismal sheep and cows who seem to know nothing of **The Way** and have learned to accept their lot as creatures of Man. Then there is the **Hard River** bordering **The Wood** on the other side along which swoop the **Roaring Owls**, great beasts loosed by Man seemingly to kill or maim any-creature foolish enough to want to cross. Not that I understand why any-creature would want to cross as on the other side are the lands of Man and those creatures bent to Mans' will, the . Many suggest that **The Bane** begins and ends with Mankind and from what I have seen of Man who am I to argue?*

THE LAW OF THE WOOD

*Lord Stag is always aware when **The Wood** is endangered, and on those occasions he goes to the **Meeting Stone** at the centre of the Brightwood. By clashing his massive antlers against the Stone, he summons the Lords of all of the other creatures to a **Gathering** to discuss the threat and what is to be done about it. While the Gathering is in progress, **The Truce** holds sway for all of the animals in **The Wood**. During **The Truce** no hunter is able to attack his prey, and so even the lowliest mouse is safe for the duration of **The Truce**. This is one of the most ancient of the **Laws**, and any creature guilty of breaking **The Truce** is either banished or slain by his **Lord**. Banishment is often considered the worse of the two punishments. Once it has been decided and agreed what is to be done about the threat, the Lords return to their own domains (still under the protection of **The Truce**) and gather their respective followers to let them know what is expected of them. Sometimes volunteers are chosen to perform duties, or to gather information, or even on occasion venture off on a long trek, depending on the nature of the threat itself. The next time the sun rises or sets, **The Truce** is over, and hunters are able once again to go about their business. Of course, by this stage they are often very hungry.....*

tide is coming in (or going out) amongst the usual knowledge of the terrain and inhabitants.

Field Lore (CR): If you have this Lore, you will know all about sowing and harvest time and when the *Roaring Dragon* (tractor) is likely to be about and how to avoid it.

Gnome Lore (CR): This Lore is unusual in that it does not relate to knowledge of terrain or habitat but to a specific and elusive creature -Gnome. It confers a knowledge of Gnome and his habits, his constructs, smell and where one might find him. A Gnome knows a simple sign language involving placing markers of sticks and/or stones on the ground or scratches on trees. This Lore also gives you a chance to work out what the messages mean.

Man Lore (CR): Like Gnome Lore, this Lore does not confer knowledge of habitat but of Man - his constructs, tools, habits and the smell of Man. Man has a smell of his own, which is quite horrible to creatures not used to Man and this can be frightening to creatures without this lore. Some believe this to be the essence of *The Bane*. The Lore does not give creatures the ability to work out how to operate machinery or how to read, but they might recognize signs from past experience, or might be able to figure out a simple device, such as how to open a simple locked cage etc.

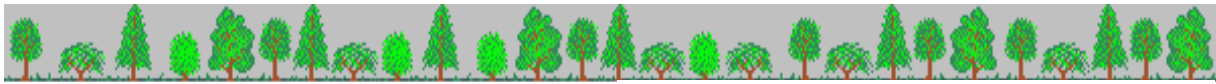
Marsh Lore (CR): Aside from knowledge of what creatures live in the Frogmarsh areas this would also enable creatures to cross the marsh safely and know about the odd furless creatures that live there.

Mountain Lore (CR): Another rare lore for denizens of *The Wood*. This Lore is likely to be known only to birds or creatures from far beyond the boundaries of *The Wood*. One specific use would be about how to avoid (or cause) rock-falls.

River Lore (CR): Knowledge of the River, its current and to a degree what is up or downstream beyond the fringes of *The Wood*.

Tunnel Lore (CR): Any-creature can dig a hole in the ground (use Toughness as the





governing trait) but this is the skill of the natural underground dweller, of digging vast complexes of tunnels and chambers, with confusing twists and turns, dead end passages and escape routes. It gives creatures the ability to navigate such burrows as well as judging direction and depth.

Wood Lore (CR): The most common lore for creatures of *The Wood*.

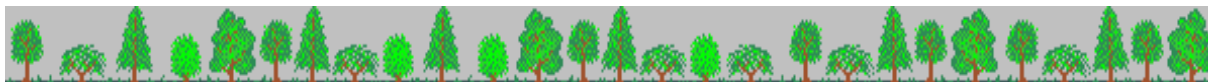
Wisdom (CR): A rare and special Lore which costs double the normal points cost (i. e. 10 points instead of the usual 5). It represents an intimate knowledge of *The Way of The Wood*, a sort of ‘animal magic’ and with the ability a creature can perform almost magical feats. The GK is advised not to let this ability come to creatures too easily. Simply finding some-creature who can teach the character the Wisdom could be the subject of a long and dangerous quest. The use of Wisdom by player creatures should be kept to a minimum so the GK is best advised to ensure it remains a rare ability and is treated with a degree of reverence. The GK should also treat it as much as a tool for his own use to aid the players when they are at a loss giving appropriate prods and pushes, as for the use of the players. Each use of Wisdom requires the expenditure of a point of *The Way*. Wisdom is split into six main categories or levels of difficulty:

- Awareness (simple): Allows the creature to foresee or predict the outcome of a specific event up to a short while into the future. How long into the future a creature can see and the level of detail the GK gives depends on the needs of the creature as well as the needs of the story. This requires a few moments of concentration.
- Herb Lore (straightforward): There are a lot of useful plants and roots in *The Wood*. The animal will know which of these are helpful in healing etc, and which are poisons to which creatures etc. It also provides the knowledge of whereabouts and when (time of year etc) they may be found. A successful check will find a plant suitable to the

task needed. The animal receiving the benefit of the plant will recover a ‘scratch’ (see the Tooth & Claw chapter) in three days and a ‘maim’ in two weeks. It can also be used to counter the effect of poison.

- Wood Wise (moderate): This use of the Wisdom allows the creature to locate a specific item, thing or creature in *The Wood*. It might for example tell the creature where a lost friend is or where a Man trap is. This requires a few moments of concentration.
- Charm (hard): Used to befriend an otherwise unfriendly creature. The ability does not give the creature power over the other, it simply makes the other believe that the character is a very good friend for a short while (dependent upon the GK and the needs of the Tale).
- Contact Pan (very Hard): Pan is the Lord of The Great Forest. He will give the answers to a few yes/no questions that the creature asks. Sometimes he will answer in a rhyme or a riddle, sometimes he will send an omen and sometimes he will not answer immediately but leave hints and clues to be found later by the creature. He will however always answer in some way, and does not lie.
- Summon Pan (formidable): Summoning Pan is something not to be taken lightly and requires the immediate expenditure of 2 points of *The Way*. If successfully summoned he will do more or less exactly what is asked of him. Often he will carry out requests exactly to the letter, so creatures need to be wary of how they word their request. Pan is the only deity that creatures acknowledge (even creatures of *The Bane*) and so they are easily cowed by the appearance of Pan. Pan appears as whatever creature he wishes but his aura is always that of the deity and there is no mistaking who he is. He will not appear to the same creature





more often than once a month.

Gnome skills

Gnome Skills can only be learned and practised by Gnomes, since they all require a degree of manual dexterity that the other creatures of *The Wood* do not have. Many of them are things that Gnomes have copied from Man.

Description of Gnome Skills

Boating (NI): With this skill Gnome can build and repair a small row-boat or coracle or even a small sail-boat. This skill also covers the handling of such craft, although River Lore would be handy in the navigation of such a vessel.

Cooking & Brewing (CR): The culinary skill of Gnomes to create lavish dishes, intoxicating ciders, wines and ales (which they love) and other assorted tasty food and drink (mainly salads and cold meals if Gnome doesn't also have the fire-making skill).

Crafting (CR): Gnomes like to make little objects, containers and utensils out of the bits of wood, shells of nuts, flint, reeds, animal hairs and so on that they collect.

Fire-Making (CR): The skill of building and containing a fire, using flints, sticks etc., just like a scout.

First Aid (CR): The Gnome skill of setting broken bones with splints, treating cuts and bruises etc. It is not a knowledge of herbs, it is purely the technical aspect. It allows a Gnome to heal a 'scratch' (see the Tooth & Claw chapter) in three days and a 'maim' in two weeks.

Marksmanship (NI): With this skill the Gnome can make and use simple ranged weapons, throw stones, slings, bows etc.

Musicianship (CR): All Gnomes like a good sing song when they get together and this skill covers exactly that - singing, playing and even making a musical instrument.

Finalising your creature

Once you have chosen a creature to play in TftW and copied the basic characteristics

over to a character sheet you have 5 points with which to improve the basic creature and to individualise your character. One completely new Ability, Lore or Gnome Skill from the lists costs 5 points. Traits cost a number of points equal to the new level of the trait. For example to increase the Nimbleness of Vole from 4 to 5 would cost 5 points. Only one increase may be 'bought' at a time using these points.

Every *Creature of The Way* also has a natural connection with or sensitivity to *The Wood* and this is measured by *The Way*. There is more information about *The Way* later in these rules, but for now simply put a '1' in the box on your character sheet.

There is a separate file included in this product, with one of each creature type with the points already allocated. All it needs is for you to choose one, give it a name and away you go. Names in TftW could be based on natural things; plants, insects and so on or upon the characters physical features or abilities. Names like Acorn, Bracken, Thistle, Swift-Paw and Sharp-Ear are all good.





PLAYER CREATURE TABLE

Creature	TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	Abilities	Lores
Frog	1 (2)	2 (3)	3	2	2	3	Hide, Leap and Swim	Marsh
Gnome	4 (6)	3 (5)	3	4	2	3	Hide + any 2 Gnome Skills	Gnome
Hedgehog	3 (5)	4 (6)	2	1	3	3	Tooth & Claw or Intimidate	Wood or Field
Mole	3 (5)	2 (3)	2	1	3	3		Wood, Field and Tunnel
Mouse	1 (2)	1 (2)	5	1	2	3	Climb, Flee	Field, Man or Wood
Rabbit	3 (5)	4 (6)	3	1	1	3	Flee	Field, Tunnel
Robin	1 (2)	1 (2)	3	1	2	3	Fly, Intimidate	Any two except Tunnel
Shrew	1 (2)	1 (2)	4	1	3	3	Flee, Tooth & Claw	Wood
Sparrow	1 (2)	1 (2)	3	1	3	3	Fly, Tooth & Claw	Any one except Tunnel
Squirrel	2 (3)	3 (5)	4	1	2	3	Climb, Leap	Wood
Toad	1 (2)	2 (3)	3	2	2	3	Hide, Swim and Intimidate	Marsh or River
Vole	1 (2)	2 (3)	4	1	2	3	Climb, Flee	Field + Wood or Tunnel
Water Vole	2 (3)	3 (5)	3	1	2	3	Swim	River, Wood





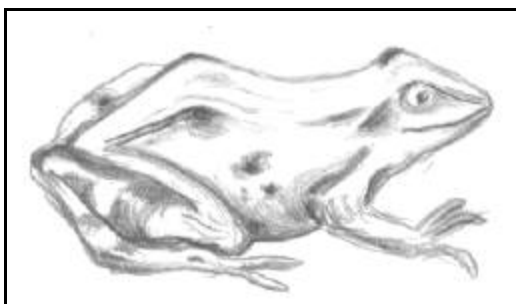
WHAT ARE THE CREATURES LIKE?

Creatures of *The Way*

Although a range of foodstuffs is described for each creature, most creatures will tend to have a nibble at almost anything especially when hungry. Those living near to Man in particular will have sampled much of Man's food waste from rubbish bins and the like – it often boils down to what is available. Described in the tables are the foodstuffs preferred and normally eaten by the creature.

Likewise enemies are far ranging - and birds of prey for example will eat most smaller animals, as will Rat, Fox, Stoat etc. The ene-

mies described are mainly those that will prey upon the creature in question but sometimes they are enemies simply because they are in competition with each other.



FROG

Where's he likely to be found? Marsh, pond

What does he like to eat? insects, slugs and worms

How big is he? 3-5"

Who are his main enemies? Grass-snakes, foxes, stoats, weasels, adders,

rats, owls, crows and otters

Frog has a short body and long powerful legs used for leaping and swimming. His kind vary in colour from yellow to black and males tend to be darker than females. Frog likes damp shaded conditions to keep their warty skins moist. Frog has a huge appetite and will continue to eat as long as food continues to be available. He tends to be active throughout most of the day. During the months of April to May Frog and his kin migrate to spawning ponds, travelling at night. Frog hibernates during winter months. When alarmed, which is often, Frog issue a weird loud shriek.

Frog has a much larger cousin, Marsh Frog (6-7") who is more aggressive, less common, and also eats fish, lizards and mice.

THE ANIMAL LORDS

Stag is the Lord of The Wood, but each species of creature also has its own Lord who looks after the affairs of his or her own kind. We Gnomes are the only exception to this rule being too few in number to have any form of hierarchic structure.

*It is usually the case that Lordship is attained by right of **Challenge** and that if any-creature considers that he or she should be the new Lord he or she has to beat the current Lord in fair fight. Sometimes these fights are to the death but more often the loser is simply left injured or maimed. The combats are particularly savage amongst most species even the otherwise normally timid Rabbit, but then there is more than simply honour at stake. The victor not only becomes (or continues as) Lord and gets to represent his or her kind in Gatherings under the Truce, but in many cases also gets the pick of mate, the pick of the best dens, and possibly a servant or two.*

In return of course the Lord should be able to protect his kind and stand up for them at Gatherings, which is not always easy for the smaller types. I have known few female Lords, but those that do make it tend to make exceptional leaders. Occasionally it happens when a Lord dies and his mate takes over the mantle in many cases being at least as capable as their dead mate.

GNOME

Where is he likely to be found? The Wood, meadow

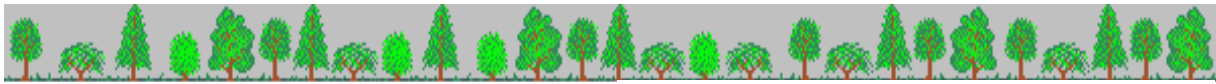
What does he like to eat? Cooked fish, fruit, nuts, roots and cider

How big is he? 10-12"

Who are his main enemies? Man

Whilst Gnome looks like a wizened old man, he does have different-looking relatives scattered far and wide. These relatives are called





by many names such as Brownie, Pixie, Sprite, Leprechaun, Knocker and so on, depending on where they are from. Whilst they are all essentially the same, Gnome insists there are differences and gets very angry with any-creature that gets it wrong.

Gnome dresses in simple clothing in shades of brown, green and grey. He has already lived to a great age, but since he hibernates often for very long periods of time (1000 years in one known case) he seems confused at the changes that have occurred in *The Wood* since he went to sleep and is more than a little forgetful.

Gnome is a solitary type and females are very rare. There are a few of Gnome's cousins around *The Wood* and the surrounding area, but they aren't often seen together. When Gnome does have visitors, he loves to swap tales and make merry. Gnome loves drinking, smoking, drinking, eating, singing, drinking and dancing. He also likes drinking. Gnome likes to collect odd bits and pieces that he finds lying around and may have some useful bauble or trinket in his home. He lives in a hollow tree, but some of his cousins choose to live in small caves, hay-lofts or old abandoned animal dens. Gnomes tend to have names like Grizzlegruff, Oakfellow, Cloudberry, Dodderer, Sneezewort, Crimblecromble, Itchynose and Danglebeard. A very ancient, unpleasant but famous Gnome was called Rumbletiltskin.

HEDGEHOG

Where is he likely to be found? The Wood, hedgerows, meadow, field

What does he like to eat? worms, slugs, insects, grass snakes and adders

How big is he? 8-10"

Who are his main enemies? Adders, foxes, and *The Roaring Owl*

Hedgehog and his family are amongst the oldest of *The Wood's* inhabitants. Their ancestry stretches back as long as Gnome can remember. Hedgehog other ancient names too; Hedgepig, Urchin, Hotchiwichi and Fuzzy Pig. Hedgehog hibernates over winter months. He is very tough and his spines are

particularly useful in his battles with his oldest enemy the adder. Also useful against the adder are Hedgehog's powerful jaws and 'snagged' teeth which help him hold onto wriggling prey. As if all of that did not make Hedgehog one of the best fighters around, his spines also provide excellent defence against any would-be predator. Hedgehog is not the quietest of creatures. He tends to crash through undergrowth snuffling and snorting as he goes. Although his diet consists mainly of grubs and insects, he occasionally eats bird chicks and eggs as well as carrion and even some small mammals!

(NOTE: Whenever an attacker rolls a '1' in Tooth and Claw against a Hedgehog it receives the equivalent of a 'nip' result on the Wound Results Table (see Tooth & Claw) against the Hedgehogs spines. Hedgehogs' spines act as a kind of armour (see Tooth & Claw Wound Modifiers Table). When curled into a ball, to all intents and purposes the Hedgehog is invulnerable to Tooth & Claw attack, but is also unable to move).

MOLE

Where is he likely to be found? The Wood, field, meadow

What does he like to eat? Worms, grubs, beetles

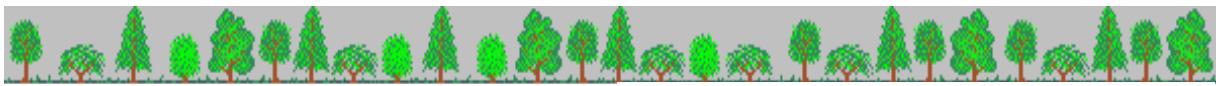
How big is he? 5-7"

Who are his main enemies? Owls, foxes, stoats, weasels and rats

Mole is generally a solitary creature. He has tiny eyes, and his vision is very poor. However to make up for this lack, Mole has an extremely sensitive nose which can pick up vibrations within his warren of complex tunnel systems. He has no external ears.

Mole, like Hedgehog and Shrew is an insectivore. Mole's family vary greatly in colouring and albinism is a common feature amongst his community. Mole's fur is velvety, and always lies flat, which is a great thing for him as he can move both backwards and forwards in his tunnel equally well. Mole's forepaws are extremely powerful for his body, and his spade-like paws allow it to tunnel underground at a very fast





rate. Mole is also very aggressive. The tunnel systems are really food collecting areas and the true nest is below a large mound of earth or so-called 'fortress'. Close to the nest are deep permanent tunnels, further out they become much more shallow.

MOUSE

Where is she likely to be found? The Wood, field, farm, meadow

What does she like to eat? Corn, seeds, berries, acorns and nuts.

How big is she? 2-3"

Who are her main enemies? Owls, stoats, weasels, rats, cats, rooks and crows

Mouse is the smallest rodent in *The Wood*. She is a natural acrobat, fast and agile. Mouse makes a regular winter retreat, but does not actually hibernate. Over these winter months, Mouse needs a large store of food. The Mouse family is made up of several different types, who are generally named for where they live. Harvest Mouse, Field Mouse, Wood Mouse, House Mouse and Yellow Necked Mouse. They conform to the same basic characteristics, although there are slight size and colour differences. Mouse makes her nest from shredded grass and leaves in hedges and sometimes in the ground. Her friend the House Mouse makes his in buildings, and often uses shredded paper or old cloth. In the summer the Harvest Mouse makes a unique nest built in the stalks of growing cereal crops, grasses or reeds.

RABBIT

Where is she likely to be found? Field, meadow

What does she like to eat? Crops, grass and wild vegetation

How big is she? 14-17"

Who are her main enemies? Stoats, foxes, weasels, Man and disease



Rabbit is a herbivore. She particularly loves to eat cultivated plants and crops and there are few she won't eat. That's what makes Man one of her greatest enemies. A Rabbit bury or warren may house only a single family or may accommodate a number of families

and cover a considerable area of land, involving a vast network of tunnels. There will be bigger warrens up to 50 entrances and exists. Rabbit is an active creature especially at night, although she is often about at dawn or dusk also. Rabbit is extremely wary and timid, and will give warnings to her fellows

below ground when danger is present by thumping the earth with her hind feet. Her fur is a sandy brown colour, although some of her friends have other colours including black. She has long ears (not as long as Hares') and large rear feet. Rabbit's tail is short and pale or white.

ROBIN

Where is she likely to be found? The Wood, field, meadow, farm

What does she like to eat? Worms, insects, grubs, berries

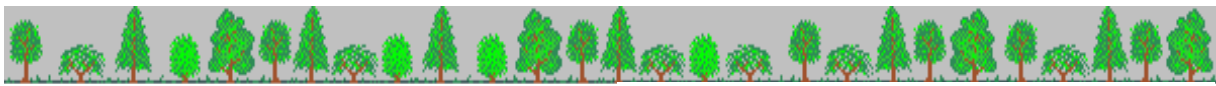
How big is she? 5-6"

Who are her main enemies? Rooks, crows, foxes, stoats, adders, weasels and owls

Robin tends to stay well clear of her male friends during the winter months, preferring the company of other females. Her males friends seldom move far from their own territory anyway. Robin herself likes to roam further afield, even migrating on occasions. Robin has an elaborate display with her red

breast which forms part of her visual danger signal to other robins, trying to enter her territory. She nests in in a hollow on a bank, or in a hedge. Robin normally lays a clutch of 4-6 eggs in her tidy nest.





SHREW

Where is he likely to be found? The Wood
What does he like to eat? Insects, worms, grubs

How big is he? 2-3"

Who are her main enemies? Weasels, stoats, foxes, rats, and owls

Shrew looks a little bit like Mouse. He has a pointed snout and a diet which consists of invertebrates (making him an insectivore). Shrew is equally active night or day. Shrew has a mildly toxic bite, which will be irritating to any-creature bitten by him. He is also very highly-strung and aggressive. Shrew's fellows are the Water Shrew and the Pygmy Shrew. The Water Shrew is the largest. The Pygmy Shrew is more likely to be found in open fields than the other types.

(NOTE: Toxic bite; Any creature bitten (and receiving at least a 'scratch' on the Wound Result Table) by a Shrew that has an equal or lower Sturdiness will become affected and suffer a -3 penalty for 2 rounds following the bite. Creatures with a Sturdiness of up to twice that of the Shrew will also be affected for 2 rounds, but only at -1. Creatures with a higher Sturdiness will not be affected).

SPARROW

Where is he likely to be found? Wood, field, farm

What does he like to eat? Worms, insects, grubs and berries

How big is he? 5-6"

Who are his main enemies? Rooks, crows, foxes, stoats, adders, weasels and owls

Sparrow has a brown-streaked upper plumage, grey crown, and white-ish chest. Sparrow is often found to 'squabble' when he gets together with his fellows and can be quite aggressive at times, sometimes mobbing larger birds in small groups to keep them away.

Sparrow nests in a hole or cavity in a building or wall, or in tall hedges or ivy and

sometimes his fellows nest in colonies. Sparrow's nest itself is large and untidy. Up to five eggs are usually laid in a clutch.

SQUIRREL

Where is she likely to be found? The Wood
What does she like to eat? Fruit, corn, nuts, bird eggs and shoots

How big is she? 8-10"

Who are her main enemies? Stoats, weasels and foxes

Squirrel is a superb climber of trees and she can leap quickly from branch to branch with ease. However she also spend a lot of her time on the ground, gathering nuts and berries for storage over winter months. Squirrel does not truly hibernate. There are two types of squirrel generally found in Britain, Red and the much more common Grey. The Grey is slightly larger, but the Red tends to be prettier and even more graceful. Squirrels are active throughout 24 hours, especially just after dawn and before sunset. Their nests or 'drays' are built in a tree hole or, more commonly built close to the trunk or main branch.

TOAD

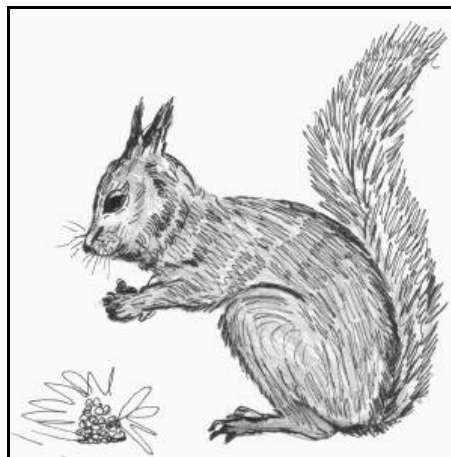
Where is he likely to be found? Marsh, pond

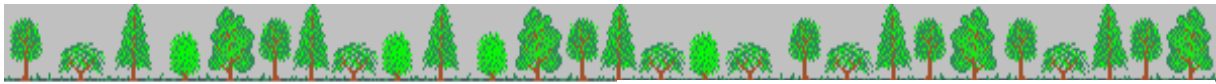
What does he like to eat? Insects, slugs and worms

How big is he? 3-5"

Who are his main enemies? Grass snakes, adders, stoats, foxes, and weasels

Toad is just as greedy as Frog. Although Toad resemble Frog, he tends to crawl rather than jump or hop with his long hind legs. Toad is nocturnal, and does not hibernate in winter. Toad has an excellent defence -he can puff up his warty body to appear much larger than he actually is. Toad's skin is dry, dull and warty. Colouration varies greatly depending on the season, but ranges from olive to





brownish-black.

The Common Toad is the larger of the two species found in Britain, but the Natterjack Toad is the noisiest, with his very loud trilling croak. When he is alarmed he has the capacity to change colour.

their extensive burrows built into riverbanks, or sometimes on the surface in dense reed bed .

VOLE

Where is he likely to be found? The Wood, field

What does he like to eat? corn, seeds, berries, shoots and nuts

How big is he? 4-5"

Who are his main enemies? Rooks, owls, stoats, rats, foxes, crows and weasels

Vole is larger than Mouse which he otherwise resembles but he has a rounder snout, and a shorter tail. There are two varieties of Vole, Red Vole and Field Vole, which conform to much the same characteristics other than different colouration. The Field Vole has a tendency to burrowing extensively underground, (Tunnel Lore) and Red Vole is also called Wood Vole or Bank Vole. The Bank Vole tends to have a russet colouration, and his ears are more prominent than those of a Field Vole, which tends to have longer shaggier greyish-brown fur. Litters vary in size from 3-6 and there are usually several litters between spring and autumn.



WATER VOLE

Where is he likely to be found? Riverbanks in *The Wood*, field and marsh

What does he like to eat? seeds, corn, nuts, berries and shoots

How big is he? 7-8"

Who are his main enemies? Pike, foxes, stoats and weasels

Water Vole is sometimes referred to as Water Rat and it is from this name that 'Ratty' comes in 'Wind in the Willows'. Although he does look a bit like a rat, with his long tail and coarse dark fur, Water Vole has smaller ears and a shorter, rounder muzzle making him much more attractive. He is much larger than their cousins the Red and Field Vole, and he is an excellent swimmer. Litters of 4-6 young are born throughout the summer in





USING ABILITIES, LORES & SKILLS

Uncontested rolls

When you try to use one of your Abilities, Lores or Gnome Skills where the GK decides that there is a chance that you could fail, the GK will call for a dice to be rolled. The type of dice rolled depends upon whether or not your character actually has the Ability, Lore or Gnome Skill in question. If you do, then you roll a d10. If you do not, then you roll a d6. To the resulting number, you add the value of the Governing Trait for the Ability used. The GK will determine the Task Difficulty which provides a target number which the dice roll + Trait must exceed in order for your character to succeed well. If the numbers are equal the success was only marginal. If the die roll + Trait is lower then the creature failed.

Example: Mouse has fallen into the River and it flows quite quickly at this point. The GK assigns a 'hard' Task Difficulty, meaning that Mouse needs to get a total of 8 to be able to swim to the bank. Mouse has a Nimbleness of 5 and does not have the Swim Ability so has to roll a d6 and needs to get a 3 or more (because she already has 5 from her Nimbleness). If she gets a 1 or 2 then Mouse is rapidly getting washed away and desperately needs help. If she rolls a 3 then Mouse might make it to the bank but only just. She would be totally and utterly exhausted and needs several minutes to recover. Whilst doing so another creature may wander past and spot her plight.....

If she rolls higher than a 3, then Mouse swims ably to the bank, runs up it and scampers off.

Contested rolls

Sometimes, especially in confrontations between animals and during Tooth & Claw in particular, it is not so much the situation that

HEDGEHOG'S TALE

Hedgehog had finished explaining his plan to Mole. Mole emerged from beneath his paws, which he had placed over his head in exasperation at the sheer stupidity of what he had just heard.

"You can't do it" he exclaimed, "it's madness and you'll get yourself killed!"

Hedgehog was unmoved. He was going to prove that he was the toughest and bravest creature in The Wood by spending one whole night on the Hard River. "I'd best get going" said Hedgehog finally, and dislodging the pile of leaves in which he and Mole had immersed themselves, set off across the clearing.

Mole didn't know what to do. He thought for a while and then decided that running round in circles whilst wailing loudly might be the best bet, so he did. When he had finished, and whilst he laid there panting for a while, it was then that he realised he was being watched. Sniffing at the scent, as pleased to note the watcher was none other than his friend Squirrel.

"I couldn't help but notice that you appeared to be distressed" she said "anything I can do to help?"

Mole calmed a little. Squirrel had that effect on many creatures -something to do with her soft voice large eyes and appealing bushy tail, Oakfellow always says. It's Hedgehog" blurted out Mole "he's intent on doing something really stupid and I haven't been able to stop him".

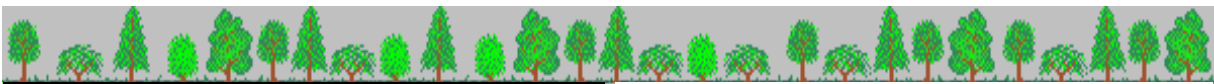
Mole then proceeded to explain Hedgehogs' plan to Squirrel whose face became graver as the story unfolded.

"Oh dear, I saw Hedgehog talking with a couple of those vile weasels from the Tanglebriars only the other day and I would bet a pawful of nuts that they have something to do with this whole business" she said unable to keep the tone of concern from her voice.

"You'll have to go after Hedgehog and try to slow him down" declared Squirrel, "and I'll go and get help" she added, as an afterthought. She turned and in one swift movement had bounded up the trunk of the nearest tree and was soon aloft in her own domain up amongst the leaves and branches.

Mole started scurrying in the direction taken by Hedgehog, knowing that all the while he closed on his friend he was getting ever closer to the dreaded Hard River of legend, a place he had always avoided so far, and one which he had no particular desire to visit. Eventually, Mole could see the lumbering prickly form of Hedgehog's rear in the undergrowth ahead. The air at this point was already tainted with the un-





natural scent of The Bane from the Hard River, but Mole bravely pushed that to the back of his mind and rushed up to his spiky friend, coughing to attract hedgehog's attention. "I thought you might get hungry so I brought this for you" indicating the fat juicy worm he had found on the way. He pushed it towards Hedgehog, who promptly gobbled it up with barely a pause, licked his lips, and continued on his way. "I know where there are more like that" tried Mole gamely, realising that his gambit had not really worked as well as he would have hoped. "Too busy" mumbled the rapidly receding form...

Task Difficulty Table

Difficulty	Total of Dice roll + Attribute
Simple	5
Straightforward	6
Moderate	7
Hard	8
Very Hard	9
Formidable	10

presents the obstacle to ability use but the opposition of another creature. This is termed an contested roll and is not made on the above table. In these situations both or all of the creatures involved get to make checks. You need to determine beforehand what is at stake for the creatures involved. In Tooth & Claw this is easy, because the loser will probably be hurt or even killed. In other confrontations or contests, the stakes may not be so easy to determine. As long as each creature has a clear idea of what they stand to gain or lose, then they make an appropriate dice roll as usual. The creature getting the highest total wins the contest.

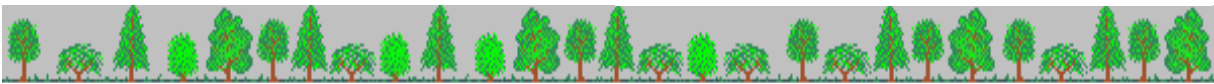
*Example: In our example above, suppose that Mouse managed to stay afloat by getting the 8 result she needed. However the dreaded Pike happens to be about and spots Mouse on the surface. At stake for Mouse is being caught and probably eaten. At stake for the Pike is simply the possibility of filling his belly. Pike sweeps in on hapless Mouse. The GK rolls a d10 for the Pike (who can of course swim) and gets a 6 to add to the Pikes' Nimbleness of 3 for a total of 9. Mouse would be wise to try to escape. Mouse gets to roll a d6 getting a 3 which added to Mouse's Nimbleness of 5 (for a total of 8) is not enough. Mouse could declare that she is using **The Way** (if she has not already used all of her points) to get a total of 9 and just stay out of the Pikes' reach.*

*The dice to use is a d10 if the creature has the Ability that he is using, or a d6 if the creature does not have the Ability.

How to decide how difficult the task is

In uncontested tasks, it is usually better to let the characters succeed more often than not. Moderate is therefore the normal maximum level for most everyday activities, where you feel a dice roll would add a bit of drama to the scene.

A hard roll would occur perhaps where bad weather makes a task more tricky or where you simply want to show the characters what they are doing is dangerous. Bear in mind that a creature with only a '1' in a Trait that doesn't have the ability in question can only succeed a hard task by expending a point of *The Way*.





TOOTH & CLAW

Overview

Whilst the Fierceness Trait represents a creature's willingness to kill, *Tooth & Claw* is the actual fighting ability of a creature. In pretty much all role-playing games, some form of combat inevitably occurs, and this provides much of the excitement of such games. TftW is a fight for survival and fighting occurs amongst animals just as it does amongst Man. However, some of the reasons that animals fight does tend to differ from the reasons that Man fights. Animals do not tend to kill wantonly and unnecessarily and in fact, except in the cases of predator verses prey (which tend to be one-sided affairs), death does not usually result from Tooth & Claw confrontations. Fighting in most cases is something to be avoided.

Reasons for fighting

Having said that, there are many things that animals fight over that correspond to the reasons that Man fought wars throughout history. Territory is one of the greatest reasons for fighting amongst both Men and animals. Animals will guard their territory and will often attack animals far bigger than themselves to protect their homes and their young.

In mating season, many animals tend to become aggressive in order to find and then keep a mate. Some females become aggressive towards males after they have mated or after they have borne their young.

Another very good reason for fighting is self defence. Certain predators will hunt and kill prey without a second thought. Occasionally the intended prey will fight back. When fighting for one's life, sometimes the intended prey can be very difficult for a predator to bring down, so it may be that the hunter goes off to tackle some-creature a bit easier.

In the fantasy world of *The Wood*, there is another reason that sometimes player-

creatures will become involved in conflict. Creatures of *The Way* are often performing quests in defence of *The Wood* and this often leads then into the path of their enemies, the creatures of *The Bane*. In this case, there is often little alternative but to kill or be killed.

Knowing when not to fight

Tooth & Claw will not always necessarily be fatal and will not usually be more than a brief flurry of activity, before one or other party flees. Sometimes, the sole purpose of a fight is to prove which creature is the stronger (which usually means the first one to get in a telling blow) and once this has been proven, the loser will just slink away. Once an animal has been hurt, often this will be sufficient for it to quit the fight and attempt to flee. More often than not the victor will allow his opponent to get away, having proven himself the stronger (except of course in the case of a predator who intended to eat the vanquished).

Mothers with young tend to fight to the death if protecting their young. Most smaller creatures will instinctively avoid getting into Tooth & Claw situations with larger creatures (although as mentioned above, player-creatures may tend to have different motives than 'normal' creatures).

How much conflict to include in TftW

It is really down to the GK to regulate how much Tooth & Claw occurs in her Tale and perhaps in each possible Tooth & Claw confrontation give one or two options other than to simply entering into combat. It has to be borne in mind that the player-creatures are in the main smaller and less aggressive (ferocious) than their enemies.

How is Tooth & Claw resolved?

Tooth & Claw is carried out in basically the same way as any other contested Ability resolution. If the creature has the Tooth & Claw ability then a d10 is rolled, and if not





then a d6 is used, and the result of the dice roll added to the Fierceness Trait of the creature. The creature with the highest roll, gains the advantage in that flurry of combat. (Each flurry is a mad blur of activity where the creatures are in a tangle of fur, teeth and claws and where each animal attempts to land a solid blow or bite and is at most only about a couple of seconds long).

The creature who wins the round of Tooth & Claw has managed to get in a telling blow, bite or scratch. The total by which the 'winner' exceeded the 'loser's' roll is then added to the Toughness of the winner. From this number is taken the Sturdiness of the creature that lost the round of combat. Any other modifiers from the *Wound Modifiers Table* (below) are taken into account to leave a final number. This number is referenced against the *Wound Results Table* to determine how badly the loser has been injured, if at all.

Where a creature chooses to escape rather than stand and fight, the player or GK may make a Flee roll, rather than Tooth & Claw roll. If the would be escaper's roll is higher than the attacker, it is assumed the creature got into cover, climbed out of reach, dived into a hole or whatever is appropriate to get out of the way.

Wound Modifiers Table

Modifiers
+ attacker's (victor's) Toughness
- defender's (loser's) Sturdiness
+1 for a Gnome using a weapon (a stick or a hurled stone)
-1 vs. a Hedgehog, due to protective spines

Severity of Wound Table

Total	Severity of wound
6 or lower	Nip
7-8	Scratch
9-10	Maim
11 or higher	Kill

Explanation of the results

Nip: The creature is knocked, nicked, or shaken and maybe even loses some fur, but no real harm is done. The creature might treat this as an indicative of the way the fight is likely to go, and attempt to flee!

Scratch: The creature has been hurt, and is bleeding. All Ability rolls are made at -1 effectiveness, until healed. If scratched again, the effects are cumulative so the creature would be at -2 on all Ability rolls and -3 if scratched for a third time and so on.

Maim: The animal is badly hurt. Possibly an ear has been ripped off or some other major damage. The animal is at -3 effectiveness on all abilities. Again effects are cumulative, so a maim result followed by a scratch becomes -4. Roll on the table below for the result of the maim

Kill: Exactly that. The GK may allow the creature to expire slowly and carry out further actions (non combat) if he is left alone by his opponent, for a few rounds but no longer.

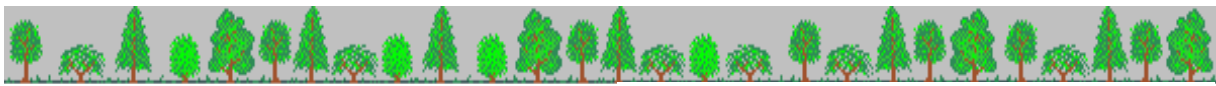
Permanent Maim Effect Table

D10 roll	Permanent injury	Permanent effect
1-4	None	None
5	Ear torn off	-1 Alertness
6	Blinded in one eye	-1 Alertness
7	Nose ripped open	-1 Alertness
8	Limb injury	-1 Nimbleness
9	Internal damage	-1 Sturdiness
10	Nasty facial scarring	+1 Intimidate

Does the loser stick around?

If the GK has determined in advance what the NPC will do if wounded, then don't worry about the next bit. However, if you need a bit of guidance about whether the wounded creature will stick around, possibly to suffer more punishment, then the answer is to roll a dice when one of the above results is scored against an against the NPC. The dice used depends on whether the NPC has





the Tooth & Claw Ability or not, as usual.

To the result add the creature's Fierceness in the usual way with the difficulty number being the wound result total. If the NPC rolls higher then it may carry on fighting but if is lower then the NPC will run (or slink, fly or whatever) off. This rule can also be used with the 'kill' result to see whether the animal can continue to function, and for how many flurries before succumbing to the Great Forest above.

Example of Tooth & Claw: *Splash, the water vole has come across a weasel from The Tanglebriars on her way to the Meadow to hunt. Rather than waste an opportunity for an easy meal, the weasel attacks the unfortunate Splash who, perhaps unwisely, decides to stand his ground. The weasel attack is rolled by the GK on a d10 (as weasels have Tooth & Claw) and to the 2 rolled is added the Fierceness of the weasel, which is 4, for a total of 6. The player rolls a d6 for Splash, and up comes a 5, which added to Splash's Fierceness of 2 gives a total of 7 and is surprisingly enough to bite the weasel! The result of 1 is added to Splash's Toughness of 2 for an overall result of 3. Looking at the Severity of **Wound Table**, this is below 6, so is simply a nip (even ignoring the fact that you would need to deduct the weasel's Sturdiness of 2, before applying the result). The weasel makes a d10 roll to see whether he sticks around after the shock of getting a nip from Splash. He already exceeds the total without the need to roll dice (He has Fierceness 4).*

Splash is more confident now, so stays in the fight and both the player and GK roll dice again. This time, Splash gets a total of 6 and the weasel gets 12. The weasel has bitten the water vole.

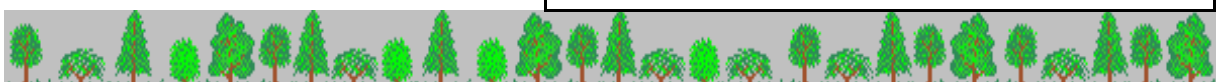
The GK adds the difference between the totals (6) to the Toughness of the weasel for a total of 10, and then subtracts Splash's Sturdiness (3) leaving 7. Looking at the Severity of Wound Table shows that a scratch has been dealt by the weasel who, seeing and smelling the

blood, is driven into a frenzy (using a point of The Bane). The water vole on the other hand is lucky to still be alive albeit wounded and now at -1 on any further Ability uses. The flurries continue in this fashion until one creature has had enough or one is injured or killed.

Suppose Splash decides to try to Flee from the maddened weasel. The player rolls a d10 (thankfully this is the extra ability the player chose for Splash at the outset) and this time adds the creature's Nimbleness for a total of 10. She has to subtract 1 from this total (for the scratch) to give the GK a target of 9 for the weasel. This time the weasel fails to bite (the d10 comes up 3) and Splash safely slips away. The weasel could however now try to follow by using its Track ability but the GK decides that she will continue on to the Meadow, unfortunately for the rabbits that live there.

Healing

A scratch will heal in a week and a maim will heal (apart from the permanent affects) in one month. This time may be reduced as a result of First Aid (Gnome Skill) or Wisdom, Herb Lore. With successful checks against these abilities, a creature will recover a scratch in three days and a maim in two weeks.





THE WAY AND THE BANE

*“Do not hurt where holding is enough
Do not wound where hurting is enough
Do not maim where wounding is enough
Do not kill where maiming is enough
The greatest creature is one who does not
need to kill”*

Stephen Donaldson

The Way

The *Way of The Wood* is part ancient tradition passed down through centuries of animal life in *The Wood* and part a natural affinity with the life energy and vibrancy of *The Wood* and its denizens. It has become a way of life and a way of being. It is a sense oneness with the environment or with the natural order of things in *The Wood*. Being a *Creature of The Way* doesn't preclude a creature from eating other animals and wildlife - far from it. Life and death is an accepted part of *The Way of The Wood*. What it does preclude though is the urge to kill for the sake of it.

Using The Way

Creatures of The Way can tap into the spirit of *The Wood* and trust to its power to improve their chances of succeeding at tasks or to do a number of other helpful things.

Increasing an Ability roll: A creature can use a point of *The Way* to add +2 to any use of a Trait, Ability, Gnome Skill or Lore. The decision must be made to do this before the dice is rolled.

Increasing a result: A creature can use a point of *The Way* to add to the result after the dice has been rolled. In this event, the modifier is +1. This is useful if a roll was reasonable, but not quite as high as you would have liked.

Roll dice again: A creature can use a point to roll a dice again. This is useful if a roll

was the minimum or very nearly the minimum. If you select this option, you take the result of the second roll.

Reducing wounds: A wound may be reduced to the next more favourable severity level. So a result of kill can be reduced to a maim by the expenditure of a point.

Good fortune: This is sometimes referred to as *dramatic editing*. A point of *The Way* can be expended to effect a little bit of luck in favour of the character. Where the narrative of a scene has not clearly defined a certain piece of information the player might suggest something that sounds reasonable and make that suggestion become fact. Use of *The Way* in this manner should be at the discretion of the other players and the GK and shouldn't be to effect major changes in a scene and can't be used to change something that has already been established as a fact. For example, if the characters are looking for a disused animal den to shelter in on during a particularly bad storm, as long as they are somewhere where one is likely to be found, one of the players could use a point of *The Way* to describe how he stumbles across and old badger set behind some concealing undergrowth. Or a mouse who has failed a swim check is slowly going under the raging river can use a point to describe how luckily a small branch floats by which he can cling to.

Wisdom: A number of the Wisdom Abilities require the expenditure of a point of *The Way*.

Recovering The Way

Creatures who have used a point or points of *The Way* are restored fully at dawn if they are diurnal (daytime) creatures or at dusk if they are nocturnal (night time) creatures. Creatures who are neither can choose when they always recover their points.





Increasing The Way

Creatures can increase *The Way* up to a maximum of 5 points, by spending points in the same way that they increase their traits (increasing *The Way* to 2 costs 2 points, to increase it again to 3 costs a further 3 points).

The Bane

Creatures of The Bane have lost their connection with *The Way* entirely. They no longer feel the oneness or the spirit of *The Wood*. *The Bane* makes them kill wantonly, destructively and without reason. What *The Bane* is exactly is not entirely certain but some creatures who choose to speculate on such things believe that it is due to the effect of Man and his machines on the natural order of things. Some believe that *The Bane* is simply another aspect of *The Way*.

How The Bane works

Whenever a *Creature of The Bane* smells fresh blood and it has a point of *The Bane* left, that point is automatically used to fuel the creature into a blood lust. The creature becomes frenzied for three flurries and will attack any creature in sight. The creature will always go for a *Creature of The Way* first, but if there are none in sight then it will go for whatever creature is nearby. If more blood is drawn in those three flurries and the creature still has *The Bane* points, then that fresh blood will fuel a further frenzy, for three more flurries. This will continue until no further fresh blood is drawn, the creature runs out of *The Bane* or there are no further creatures nearby to attack.

Recovering The Bane

Creatures who have used a point or points of *The Bane* are restored fully at dawn if they are diurnal (daytime) creatures or at dusk if they are nocturnal (night time) creatures. Creatures who are neither can choose when they always recover their points.

Gaining Bane

Creatures who choose to kill unnecessarily or commit wanton acts of violence or destruction against *The Wood* or its inhabitants is likely to start to fall towards *The Bane* or their *Bane* points will increase still further if they are already creatures of *The Bane*.

This game is not really about playing creatures of *The Bane*, so the rule here is really down to the GK to interpret in her own way. Any player-creature who commits such acts should get perhaps get a warning (maybe via Pan or by his own Animal Lord) and if he continues in this way, then he should receive a *Bane* point.

In actual fact, it could make for some good role-playing having one PC battling against his darker nature, so do not necessarily dismiss the idea of player-creatures suffering *The Bane* at some point. It just shouldn't be the 'norm' and it should only be used to develop some interesting and searching role-playing experiences. If you know a player is doing it just to be a badass, then you probably shouldn't allow it to happen.

Creatures with both The Way and The Bane

Some creatures have both *The Way* and *The Bane*. In this instance, it depends on which of the two aspects is the higher. If *The Way* is the higher (or they are equal) *The Way* keeps *The Bane* in check. Fresh blood will interest the creature, especially if it is hungry, but the creature will not become frenzied. However, if *The Bane* is higher (perhaps the creature has used a point or two of *The Way*), then use the rules for *The Bane*, until *The Way* is equal or higher again. *The Bane* cannot be lost once a creature has it, so the only way to keep it under control is to keep *The Way* the higher of the two.





THE GAMEKEEPER

Overview

As the Gamekeeper, you have the tough but rewarding task of bringing all this information together, and creating an interesting Tale (at least starting the creation of an interesting Tale, as your players have to help you too) and of breathing life into *The Wood* and its denizens. For most role-playing games this may seem daunting enough, but for TftW this would initially appear doubly-so. There are no 'stock' adventure ideas in TftW - no dungeon crawls, no barroom brawls, no caravan guarding jobs to be had. However, in a way this forces you to be more creative and think the adventure through and this in itself means the players have to also be more inventive in their play. Just sitting down and thinking hard about *The Wood* and its inhabitants will start to give a creative GK some simple plot ideas.

Your job is that of the storyteller, actor, director and producer all in one. Added to that you need to be at least familiar with the game rules. The game rules should not, however, get in the way of creativity and the Tale is far more important than any of the rules in TftW. Treat the rules more as guidelines that can be dropped if they begin to get in the way.

In *The Wood* there are the villains typical in most other role-playing games, there are the dangers to be avoided and the other 'evil' roles filled by the weasels and stoats and other Creatures of *The Bane*. There are also the sages (Owls and other creatures with Wisdom), the would be helpers, the ones with whom careful negotiation must take place to secure aid if needed -but a wrong word or misplaced deed and they can become a deadly enemy. Of course, the adventurers are the PCs and their friends, the Creatures of *The Way*.

Most animals in *The Wood* are not 'adventurers', they merely go about their daily business of eating, rearing their young,

avoiding being eaten etc. These are the NPC's (non-player creatures) and their attributes are essentially taken directly from the appropriate *Creature Table*.

Reading the books listed in the introduction will give you some adventure ideas. Reading some natural history books will give further adventure ideas. However, as the GK you should try to ensure the game does not start to become a lesson in natural history. The right balance between realism and fantasy should be sought. To help you we have included some information about *The Wood* and the creatures that live there as well as three Tales which may be told exactly as they stand or may be dissected for the bits you feel will fit into your own style of play, or suit the players in your group.

In addition the short stories *Hedgehog's Tale*, and *Frog's Tale* have been left deliberately unfinished in order that you may use the storyline presented to commence a simple adventure. The players create PC's from those presented (Hedgehog, Mole and Squirrel for example from Hedgehog's Tale) and you read the first part of the narrative. The players then take up the Tale from there and see how it unfolds.

Time in TftW

Hours, minutes and seconds are Man concepts. In TftW animals do not live by the human clock, but by their biological clock. This tells them when to wake up, eat, sleep and mate. The day is split into four parts Dawn, Day, Dusk and Night. Certain animals prefer to go about their activities at certain times of the day. Those who operate by day are 'diurnal', at night 'nocturnal' and during dawn or dusk 'crepuscular'.

Player creatures do not need to worry about when they are active. For the purposes of their quests and adventures, they are active when they need to be and they can decide as a group when they eat, rest and sleep.

You need not keep a slavish record of time





elapsed in TftW (unless you really want to). Generally, adventures will take place over several days and if it is important to know when things happen, you simply need to say that it happens at dusk or dawn or whatever. On occasion, for example, during a confrontation, you can handle what is going on in 'scenes'. A scene is when something specific happens. Tooth & Claw, it may be useful to keep a stricter sense of time. The concept of *flurries* (discussed earlier) can be used in these situations.

A flurry in TftW is a short period of time (in human terms a few seconds). Keeping track of flurries may be useful, for example, when Mole is trying to dig himself underground while Fox is rapidly approaching.

Movement & distance

Gnome measurements are generally used to determine distance, when necessary. Gnomes are about one-sixth the height of a Man, so a Gnome mile is about one-sixth of a Man-mile. A Gnome foot is about 2 inches. A Gnome yard is about six inches. However, don't get to hung up on distances. Creatures do not have set 'move rates' or anything similar in this game. It's more a question of what's right for the story than what's right in terms of how far a creature can move in some predetermined timescale.

During a day a creature may travel a number of (human) miles equal to its (To + St)/2. This is the maximum distance normally possible. Birds may fly treble the normal range. During a flurry, movement is based on Nimbleness. The creature with the highest Nimbleness moves first and, relatively, the furthest. E.g. compare Mouse (Ni 5) and a fox (Ni 3).

Mouse moves much more quickly and further than Fox in the short space of time represented by a round, but in a day a Fox may travel up to 6.5 miles compared to Mouse who can travel only 1 mile per day.

Remember that one Man mile is equal to six Gnome miles.

Animal speech

Animals in TftW do not 'talk' as such. Their method of communication is a series of gestures, grunts, growls, squeaks, squawks, caws, hisses, hoots and the like, all of which together convey the appropriate message.

You may make this language system as simple or as complex as you like. The simple method is to say that all animals 'speak' the same language. An alternative would be to say that each species speaks a different language, so for example, for Mole to understand and converse with Mouse he would need to learn 'Mousetalk'.

There could be a common tongue (perhaps invented by Gnome) with each animal speaking its own language.

Other possibilities are that 'foreign' animals speak a different language, for example an escaped pet hamster or zoo escapee etc. Creatures from other woods could perhaps talk differently, or birds could have their own language, fish another, and so on.

Guns

Guns (called *Thunderers* by those creatures that are aware of them) kill. It is as simple as that. If a creature is hit, it dies.

If a creature is trying to get away, it should get an opposed Flee roll against the GK's roll for the Man firing the gun. If it is a farmer or poacher then it will have the appropriate skill (roll d10) but if it is a kid messing about or whatever then it is unlikely to (roll d6). Man generally has a Nimbleness of only 1 or 2.

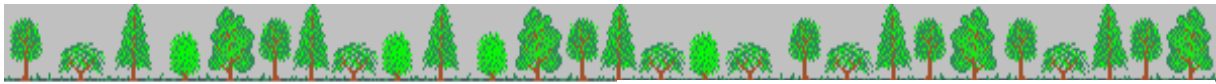
A point of *The Way* spent may either be used in the normal way to increase the PC's chance of escaping or in this case may be used to reduce the wound from 'kill' to 'maim'.

Cars

Called *Roaring Owls* by the creatures of *The Wood*, these horrific beasts, like guns, simply kill any-creature hit by one. As usual, a point of *The Way* may be used to reduce any 'kill' result to a 'maim'.

Cars are also highly intimidating, and have a





Fierceness, for intimidation purposes equivalent to 1 point per 10 mph the car is traveling. Of course, cars cannot be intimidated back.

Poisons

Poisons are not a common thing for creatures of *The Wood* to come across. Generally Man may use poisons for a specific purpose (e.g. Rat poison) or a creature with Wisdom, herb lore may seek out a naturally growing poisonous plant for some reason. However they should really be used in way that is integral to, or important to, The Tale.

You simply need to know the worst effect that is required of the poison (e.g. it kills, paralyzes, causes sickness and vomiting etc) and the highest Sturdiness that the poison will effect, as well as whether there are any secondary or weaker effects at a higher Sturdiness.

Example: The GK wants a rat poison in his Tale and decides that he wants it to kill ordinary rats. Accordingly he decides that the effect works on creatures up to 4 Sturdiness. Over this and up to 6 Sturdiness, he decides the effect is to make the creature violently ill and at -3 on all Abilities for a whole day. At a Sturdiness of 7 or higher there is no effect. The poison must be ingested (eaten) and so is placed in foodstuffs that would appeal to rats. It might take an Alertness check to spot the poison on the food, maybe using Man Lore if the creature has it.

Fire

Fire is extremely dangerous to *The Wood* and it's denizens. All creatures (except Gnomes) are quite naturally terrified of fire, some believing it is the essence of *The Bane*, others believing it is one of Man's beasts, and others thinking it is just a mad ravaging creature, wild and uncontrollable. Most however are just plain scared of fire.

As the GK it is left up to you whether you want to create a Tale that will involve a fire in *The Wood*, and what 'rules' if any, you will use. It is certainly best left for individual

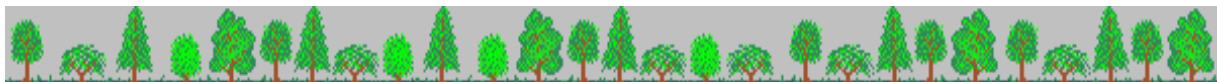
GK's to determine what effect they want by putting something as terrible as a fire in their Tale in the first place, and besides, fires follow no rules anyway.

Man

There are no stats for Man, because it is not anticipated that you will include Man in your Tales for the purpose of bringing them into combat with the creatures. They may get into some form of conflict or confrontation, but they will not fight each other.

Generally speaking creatures know little of Man, unless they have Man Lore. So all of Man's works will be a complete mystery. In many cases they will be something to be afraid of. Cars (called *Roaring Owls*) are terrifying. They travel at great speed along the *Hard River*, emitting a horrifying howling sound and belching out a foul stench that seems to cling to everything and reeks of *The Bane*. Equally, the Farm is a terrible place, where even the dog and cat are under the complete mastery of Man. Only creatures who are deranged will go anywhere near Man.





CREATURES OF THE BANE TABLE

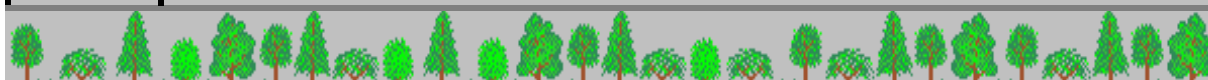
Creature	TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	Abilities	Lores
Adder	2 (3)	4 (6)	3	2	3	3	Hide, Tooth & Claw	Wood, Field or Beach
Buzzard	6 (9)	8 (12)	2	2	4	3	Fly, Tooth & Claw	Wood
Crow/ Rook	4 (6)	5 (8)	2	2	3	3	Fly, Tooth & Claw	Man + any other (not tunnel)
Fox	6 (9)	9 (11)	3	3	3	3	Tooth & Claw, track	Wood
Grass Snake	3 (5)	6 (9)	3	2	3	3	Hide, Intimidate, Tooth & Claw, Swim	Wood, Field or Tunnel
Kestrel	4 (6)	5 (8)	4	2	4	3	Fly, Tooth & Claw	Field
Pike	7 (11)	7 (11)	3	1	3	3	Hide, Swim, Intimidate	River
Rat	3 (5)	4 (6)	3	2	3	3	Climb, Tooth & Claw	Man + any one other
Stoat	4 (6)	4 (6)	3	2	4	4	Climb, Intimidate, Tooth & Claw, Track	Wood, Field or Tunnel
Weasel	2 (3)	2 (3)	4	2	4	4	Climb, Intimidate, Tooth & Claw, Track	Wood, Field or Tunnel





OTHER CREATURES TABLE

Creature	TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	Abilities	Lores
Badger	8 (12)	8 (12)	2	2	3	3	Tooth & Claw	Wood, Tunnel
Deer	14 (21)	14 (21)	3	2	2	3		Wood, Man
Hare	5 (8)	6 (9)	3	2	2	3	Flee or Tooth & Claw	Field, Wood or Mountain
Lizard	2 (3)	2 (3)	3	2	2	3	Hide, Climb, Swim	Wood, Field
Newt	2 (3)	1 (2)	2	2	2	3	Hide, Swim	Marsh, Wood
Otter	6 (9)	7 (11)	3	2	3	3	Swim, Track, Tooth & Claw	River
Owl	4 (6)	5 (8)	3	5	4	3	Fly, Tooth & Claw	Wood, Wisdom + any one other except tunnel
Swan	8 (12)	10 (15)	3	2	2	3	Fly, Swim	River + any one other except tunnel





GAMEKEEPER CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

Creatures of *The Bane*

These creatures are generally those twisted by *The Bane* and as such are the deadly enemies of the player-creatures, who are all creatures of *The Way*. Aside from that, most of these animals tend to find the smaller Creatures of *The Way* to be very tasty and they are often on the top of their food lists. Creatures of *The Bane* have at least 1 point of *The Bane*. They have no points of *The Way*.

ADDERS

Where are adders likely to be found?
Wood, Field, Beach

What do adders like to eat? Most small creatures, carrion, worms

How big is an adder? 24"

Who are an adder's main enemies?
Hedgehog, birds of prey, crows

Britain's only poisonous snake, adders prefer dry habitats and hibernate from October to March/April. Adders are active throughout the day. Adders have reddish eyes and a black tongue which they use to scent their prey. Adders tends to be pale grey with black markings but females are brownish in colour and tend to be larger than males.

Mating occurs in May or June and there are violent battles between males over females at this time. The young, born in egg sacks which break immediately, appear in August or September and number 5-15.

Adders use their tongues to scent their prey and are one of the few reptiles that are about for 24 hours a day.

Note: When an Adder bite causes at least a 'scratch' (see *Wound Results Table* in *Tooth & Claw* section) any smaller or same sizes creature will die (compare Sturdiness). Up to twice the size of the adder the effect of the poison is to become very ill for the whole

day, and all activity is at -3.

BUZZARDS

Where are buzzards likely to be found?
Wood, Field

What do buzzards like to eat? Most small creatures, carrion, worms

How big is a buzzard? 24"

Who are a buzzard's main enemies? Man
The buzzard is a majestic bird of prey and one of the most common. It has a very large wingspan and is much larger than a crow. Though variable in pattern, most buzzards are brown above and creamy below, with heavy brown spots across the breast and dark barring on the wings. They nest in trees and sometimes in craggy cliffs, and make nests from sticks and stems, often decorated with fresh sprays of greenery. They lay a clutch of 2-3 eggs.

CROWS AND ROOKS

Where are crows and rooks likely to be found? Wood, field

What do crows and rooks like to eat? Insects, Worms, Grain, Mouse, Vole, carrion

How big are crows and rooks? 17-19"

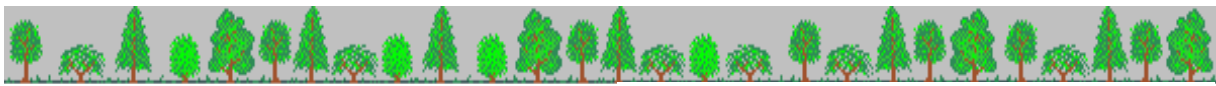
Who are a crow or a rook's main enemies? Cat, Fox

A crow is slightly larger than a rook, but they are otherwise similar. Both have black plumage and beak, beady eyes and a fondness for carrion (dead meat). Both are strong fliers and are aggressive, with evil reputations, similar to that of their larger cousin the raven. Crows are rarely seen in flocks, much more often seen either singly or in pairs.

They sometimes roost with jackdaws and rooks most often in woodland.

Rooks on the other hand roost in high tree-tops in what is known as a rookery where an average of 25 nests will be, but larger rookeries do exist containing up to 2000 nests al-





though this number is very rare.

FOXES

Where are foxes likely to be found? Wood

What do foxes like to eat? Mouse, Vole, Rat, Hare, Rabbit, Birds, eggs, fish

How big is a fox? 25-30"

Who are a fox's main enemies? Man

The fox is Britain's largest surviving carnivore, and the terror of *The Wood*, with no natural predators but a wide range of prey. Almost any creature in *The Wood* is fair game to cunning the fox.

A fox has reddish fur, with a pale underside and black on the ears and front of the legs. The tail is bushy and tipped with white.

Foxes have proven to be extremely adaptable, many living alongside Man even though they seem to be enemies. Foxes are highly vocal animals, often for several hours after sunset. Sounds include intermittent high-pitched barks and a hoarse wailing bark.

A single litter of 4-5 young is born to the female (called a Vixen) in late March, and the family groups may stay loosely together, although the Vixen generally looks after the cubs.

GRASS SNAKES

Where are grass snakes likely to be found? Wood, Marsh, River bank, Field

What do grass snakes like to eat? Frog, Toad, newt

How big is a grass snake? 48"

Who are a grass snake's main enemies? Stoat, Weasel, Rat

The grass snake is Britain's largest reptile. There are many different colours and the upper-side may be black-brown, grey, olive or reddish.

The grass snake prefers open woodland, grassland, hedgerows, marshy areas and along riverbanks and pondsides. Never far from water the grass snake is an excellent swimmer. It hibernates from October to April. The grass snake does not eat the small mammals that are so important to adders, sticking mainly to eating Frog and Toad as well as newts. The grass snake hunts mainly by day.

KESTRELS

Where are kestrels likely to be found? Field

What do kestrels like to eat? Mouse, Vole, Sparrow, Robin, beetles, worms

How big is a kestrel? 12-14"

Who are a kestrel's main enemies? Man

The Kestrel is the most common bird of prey over most of Britain. Its most frequent habit is that of hovering, as if hanging on a string, its wings beating rapidly or flickering lightly according to changes in the wind.

Kestrels have long slender wings and tail, and often hunt their prey by the side of the road (Hard River). They nest in old crow's nests, in cavities in trees, barns or other buildings.

PIKE

Where are pike likely to be found? River, Deep Pond

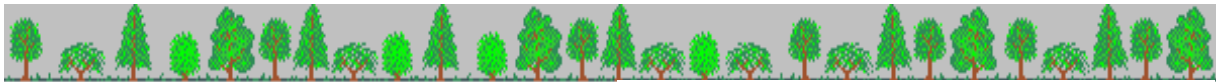
What do pike like to eat? fish, Water Vole, Baby Swan

How big is a pike? Ask a fisherman

Who are a pike's main enemies? Man, Otter, Mink

Pike are enormous and dangerous predatory fish. They have long bodies of mottled colouration. Pike wait amongst rushes and





reeds, where their mottling makes good camouflage and then they make a sudden dash to clamp their prey in their massive jaws. Almost any small creature finding itself in the River is fair game for the monstrous pike.

RATS

Where are rats likely to be found? Almost anywhere

What do rats like to eat? Almost anything

How big is a rat? 9-12"

Who are a rat's main enemies? Large birds of prey, foxes, cats, stoats

Brown rats tend to be larger than the black rats, but otherwise the two types conform to the same basic characteristics. Brown rats are much the more common of the two and have a more aggressive nature.

They have coarse fur of colour appropriate to their names, although there is a little colour variation and they have long, thick, scaly, almost naked tails.

Rats are prolific breeders, are adaptable to almost any kind of habitat, often found in Man habitations, will eat almost anything and are carriers of all kinds of diseases because of the abundance of lice and fleas they carry. Gestation takes only 10 days and litters can number up to 10, so it is easy to see why rumours of rats in *The Wood* sends shivers down the spines of every-creature.

STOATS

Where are stoats likely to be found? Wood, Field

What do stoats like to eat? Mouse, Vole, Rabbit, Hare, Rat, Robin, Sparrow, Mole, eggs

How big is a stoat? 12"

Who are a stoat's main enemies? Foxes, birds of prey

Often referred to as Hob, the word Stoat actually means bold and this is certainly true of this sleek predator. Stoats use their intimidatory ability to the full when hunting Rabbit and Hare which are much larger than themselves, to paralyse them with fear before pouncing for the kill.

Stoats have a dull brown coat with white

breast and a black tip to their long tails. In the winter months the stoat's coat may turn entirely white except for the black tail tip. The stoat's body is long and slim.

The breeding nest may be in a litter filled ditch, niche in a stone wall, under a hedge or occasionally in rabbit warrens. The young are born in April or May and the litter numbers between 6-12.

WEASELS

Where are weasels likely to be found? Wood, Field

What do weasels like to eat? Mouse, Vole, Rabbit, Mole, Sparrow, Robin, eggs

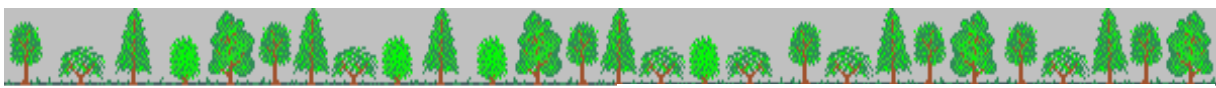
How big is a weasel? 8"

Who are a weasel's main enemies? Foxes, birds of prey

Also known as Kine, weasels have a vicious bite and are related to stoats, as well as to badgers, mink, polecats, otters, pine-martens and ferrets. All are carnivorous, and many have a bloodthirsty streak. Like stoats, weasels have a light breast and under belly but they have shorter tails with no black tip and are much smaller. In fact weasels are Britain's smallest carnivore.

They rest in burrows taken from other species or in crevices in walls but do not have permanent dens, except for breeding. Young are born from April to May and a litter numbers 4-6.





Other Creatures of *The Wood*

These creatures are all normally non-player creatures. If truth be told, they are all probably *Creatures of The Way* rather than *The Bane* but tend either to have their own agendas or concerns and therefore cannot become too involved in the smaller concerns of the player-creatures. Alternatively, they are big enough to push the player-creatures around and get them to do the tasks and errands that are required to keep *The Bane* in check. The GK may however allow players to choose from these animals if she wishes. Be warned though, part of the fun and excitement of TftW is due to the fact that the creatures the players get to choose from are largely much weaker than the others and therefore the fight for survival relies more upon exceptional role-play and less on the 'let's fight it out again' attitude of other role-playing games.

These creatures have points in both *The Way* and in *The Bane*. As long as they have at least equal points in *The Way* as they do of *The Bane*, then they can keep their Bane in check. However, if they have fewer points in *The Way* their Bane takes over. (See the chapter headed *The Way and The Bane* for further information about this).

BADGERS

Where are badgers likely to be found? Wood

What do badgers like to eat? Mouse, Vole, Frog, snails, fruit, nuts, worms

How big is a badger? 26 -32"

A badger's main enemies are? Man

Badger is amongst the largest and most powerful of the creatures of *The Wood*. Badger has strong legs and claws as well as powerful jaws. It has a coat of stiff short hairs, which are whitish with a black bend behind the tip giving Badger a grey appearance. Badger has a



white head with a black stripe over ear and eye.

Badger is essentially a nocturnal animal. He is cousin to Weasel, Stoat and Otter but prefers to eat 'easier' foodstuffs such as windfall apples worms and blackberries than do his more bloodthirsty relatives. Badger lives in a network of underground chambers and tunnels called a set and is a sociable creature tending to live in groups.

Successive generations may continue to occupy and enlarge the set.

Mating takes place in spring, but the young are not born until the following year. The litter normally consists of up to four young.

Badger has many other names such as Grey-Pate, Bawsin, Brock and Baget.

DEER

Where are deer likely to be found? wood

What do deer like to eat? Grass, heather, moss

How big is a deer? 48" (at shoulder)

A deer's main enemies are? Man

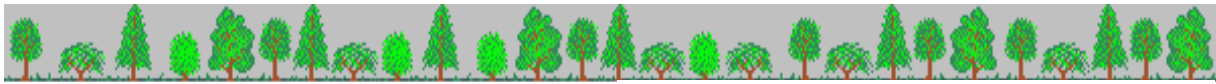
Deer are herbivorous, and chewing animals related to cattle and sheep (though they will not thank you for reminding them of this). They need to eat large volumes of vegetation and whilst feeding are vulnerable to predators (although only Man remains as a hunter of Deer in Britain), so have the habit of eating quickly then retiring to the safety of thick cover, where food is regurgitated and eaten at leisure.

Most species of deer sport antlers, but only the male of the species. Dealt with here is the (native) Red Deer, but also native to Britain is the smaller Roe Deer. The stags (males) are at their most aggressive in the rutting season (September).

Each stag will have a 'harem' of about 15 females.

Stag is the most noble of all creatures in TftW. He is usually the Lord of *The Wood*, and most sensible creatures will take notice of





what he says.

HARES

Where are hares likely to be found?

Mountain, Field

What do hares like to eat? Grass, Leaves, Shoots

How big is a hare? 19-24"

A hare's main enemies are? Foxes, stoats

Hares are distinguished easily from Rabbit - they are larger, have longer rear legs, longer ears and do not burrow. The hare is much more solitary than Rabbit, and can often out-run or outmanoeuvre most predators. The hare has powerful back legs with which he can leap astounding distances, or deliver nasty blows to would-be attackers. He also bites and scratches.

Mountain hares are smaller than their low-land counterparts and have shorter ears and legs. Mountain hares have blue/grey fur tending towards white in winter, whereas brown hares have (surprisingly) brown fur. Hare is also known as Puss, Sarah or Grass Cat.

Hares are mainly active at dusk and at night although sometimes in the spring they may gather in small groups during the daytime when the pre-mating 'boxing matches' and chases take place.

Hares breed and shelter in a small surface scrape known as a 'form'. The young are called leverets. The mountain hare sometimes dig small burrows or take over old rabbit warrens.

LIZARDS

Where are lizards likely to be found?

Wood, field

What do lizards like to eat? Worms, grubs, insects

How big is a lizard? 5-7"

A lizard's main enemies are? Crows, kestrels, foxes.

Like snakes, lizards are reptiles and, also like snakes they have a scaly skin. They love the warmth, seeking sheltered, sunny positions. They have to hibernate over the winter months. On the upper side, they are grey-

brown or red-brown in colour, broken by pale or dark spots. On their sides are rows of yellow, white and sometimes black spots. Lizards are quite good climbers and can swim very well. Sand lizards are bigger than common lizards. Slow worms are also lizards but, like snakes, have no legs and are by far the largest, being up to 20" long.

NEWTS

Where are newts likely to be found?

Marsh, Pond

What do newts like to eat? Grubs, snails, worms, tadpoles, insects and even other newts.

How big is a newt? 3-5"

A newt's main enemies are? Crows, kestrels, foxes.

Newts can be mistaken for lizards, though they are not reptiles but amphibians, like Frog and Toad. They have a long slender body with a short head and long tail. The skin is very thin. Crested (or 'Warty') newts are far bigger than their common cousins and their skin produces an irritating secretion to keep predators away.

OTTERS

Where are otters likely to be found? River

What do otters like to eat? Fish, eel, frogs, toads

How big is an otter? 30"

An otter's main enemies are? Pike, mink

The Otter is cousin to the badger as well as the stoat and weasel. They have sleek streamlined bodies (excellent for swimming) and usually have brown fur. Their fur serves to trap air to their bodies when they dive below water to keep them warm. In some cases, otters live close to the sea, and swim as easily off the sea coast as do fresh water otters inland (these otters would have Beach Lore rather than River Lore).

Otters normally live solitary lives, apart from the breeding period, usually late winter or early spring. After a gestation period of 9 weeks 2-5 cubs are born and it is 2-3 months before they are able to swim.

Mink are alien to Britain, but having been





introduced are becoming a pest, and certainly competition to otters. Otters are able to track, using their whiskers to pick underwater vibrations.

OWLS

Where are owls likely to be found? Wood, field, farm

What do owls like to eat? Small animals and small birds

How big is an owl? 14-16"

An owl's main enemies are? Larger birds of prey, fox

Owls hunt at night (the Short Eared Owl does most of its hunting in daylight). Owls are extremely effective predators. They have excellent hearing, which they use to follow their prey before striking. Most owls live in the woodland, but Barn Owls tend to live in disused farm buildings (hence the name). Long Eared Owls tend to live in deeper woodland so that they can also range over the fields. Short Eared Owls sometimes visit coastal marshes. Other owls are the Little Owl and probably the commonest owl, the Tawny Owl.

SWANS

Where are swans likely to be found? Pond, river

What do swans like to eat? Waterplants

How big is a swan? 48 - 60"

A swan's main enemies are? Pike

The Mute Swan is native to Britain. Others migrate into Britain during winter months, from colder climates -Arctic Russia and Iceland, where they take residence on streams, rivers, ponds and lakes across the country. They are extremely large white birds, that honk and hiss (if their size is not enough) to drive off intruders. They have orange and black, or yellow and black bills and are otherwise essentially white, although young have brown plumage at first. They nest near water or in emergent vegetation and lay 5-7 large eggs in a huge pile of leaves, stems and roots.

Frog's Tale

*Big Eyes peered into the gloom. He blinked, gulped and swam forward to where a few twigs and dead leaves floated on the surface of the water and relative safety. The marsh behind him was strangely silent as if all of the frogs he had left behind were listening for sounds of his progress. Up ahead the tall, dark silhouettes of the trees looked both terrifying and magnificent to the humble frog who had never been this close to them before. He watched for a moment and listened to the strange sounds emanating from the direction in which he had to travel. Big Eyes had of course occasionally caught the louder cries and squeals that came across the **Frogmarsh** from **The Wood** but what he could hear from this close vantage point filled the poor frog with terror. He blinked and gulped involuntarily. He felt sick. He thought briefly about turning around and going back home. That however would be too easy and would be an admission of failure and cowardice. He would never gain any-creatures' respect and would never become **Froglord** -something he had always decided he would one day aspire to. Even the beautiful Green-rush would not look at him ever again if he gave up now and he wouldn't be able to bear the thought of her with any frog other than himself. Holding onto these thought Big Eyes dived again into the still moonlit waters and with a soft splash and headed for the far bank.*

The pike was waiting patiently in the reeds at the edge of the pond. He knew that if he waited long enough some-creature would swim past and then it would be a simple matter of darting from his cover and opening his huge jaws. The pike knew he was the master of the River and the Pond.

*"Aye, if I could walk I would also be the master of **The Wood**", he said to himself, a small stream of bubbles drifting away from his gills as he did so. The pike's massive mouth parted in what might pass for a grin amongst fish-kind as he pictured himself striding gloriously through the trees, all the creatures of **The Wood** cowering before him in fear. "Even the Stag. Oh yes, he thought, especially the bloody Stag".*

It was probably the fact that the Pike was not quite paying attention that saved Big

Eyes' life. The frog didn't realize this himself, of course. He simply saw it that he had had a tussle with the most terrifying creature that had ever lived and survived. Suffice to say that after much thrashing and foaming of water and several screams of fright Big Eyes the frog-hero dragged himself up the bank and flopped scared witless and exhausted onto the grass. Very soon he would become a Frog-Legend, if he could ever get his wobbly legs working again!

The Pike meanwhile, cursed himself inwardly for a fool, but then decided he hadn't fancied frog for supper anyway and settled back into the reeds, there to await another hapless swimmer-by, almost as quickly forgetting that the frog had ever existed..





DESIGNING MORE CREATURES

Overview

There are many different species and varieties of animals, not touched upon in these rules. In particular amongst the bird kingdom there are hundreds of types of bird that either visit these shores or reside here –magpies, jackdaws, cuckoos, thrushes, blackbirds, starlings, kingfishers, woodpeckers, tits, herons, hawks, jays, swallows, to name just a few.

It is impossible to print stats for every one in this game. All we have done is give the flavour of the game, and if other creatures are required, where no rules exist, then the following chapter is intended to be of help in the design of a set of stats for whatever creature you need in your campaign, using existing animals as a guide and of course referring to appropriate reference works. A player may particularly want to play his favourite creature, for instance Bat, and provided the referee is happy to do so, then these rules will help in the design of the basic creature.

Sometimes the Gamekeeper will require a specific animal for a scenario. A Wallaby for instance (which from escaped stock are now firmly established in parts of Britain) or an escaped pet hamster or guinea pig etc. One of the scenarios at the back of this book shows how a newly designed animal can be used for a specific scenario idea.

Designing your creature

The first thing to do when designing the characteristics for any new animal is to read at least one good reference book about that particular animal (it is preferable to read more than one, as well as watching any nature programmes that are on TV about the animal). Make notes about the animal (especially it's size, food, habitat, life-span,

enemies etc). Once you have a good basic feel for the animal compare what is said about it, to animals already described in these rules. You can use the animals in these rules as a good guide to the one you are designing.

Traits

You should normally start with the creature's Traits. For player-creatures these tend to be in the range of about 13 to 16 or so.

Sturdiness: You need to compare the animal's actual size in inches to the following table (do not include the tail in the animal's length). The length of the animal will be an indicator of its sturdiness. Basically, the score derived from the table will give its Sturdiness Trait. However, if the animal is particularly noted for its tough pelt, or its resistance to toxins etc (like the Hedgehog) you then add 1 to the basic Sturdiness value.

Creature size	Sturdiness
1-3"	1
4-6"	2
7-9"	3
10-12"	4
13-18"	5
19-24"	6
25-30"	7
31-36"	8
37-42"	9
43-48"	10
+6"	+1

Toughness: Toughness starts at the same value as the creature's (unmodified) Sturdiness. If the animal is noted for particularly powerful claws or limbs (such as Mole's





forepaws), or can deliver horrendous bites, or has a strong or stocky build, then possibly add 1 to the starting point.

If the creature is not noted for being particularly powerful or has a weak build then the value may be reduced by 1. Toughness and Sturdiness will generally be within a point or two of each other. These attributes may be improved by up to half again of their initial starting values with points awarded by the GK after the successful completion of adventures. This represents growth of the animal beyond average size and general toughening up due to experience but not to unrealistic heights.

Nimbleness: If a creature is small, it is likely to be nimble. If a creature is noted for its climbing ability (e.g. Squirrel) it again is likely to be nimble. The average will be about 3. Many animals are recorded as being agile so be careful before making your creature into a super-nimble acrobat, only go above 3 if the creature is exceptionally so. Mouse has about the highest nimbleness at 5, so starting values will not normally be higher than this.

Craftiness: Craftiness is 1 for the smaller animals or herbivores etc. Carnivores tend to be more cunning as they have to catch wary prey. Animals that live longer also develop more cunning and are likely to have a greater Craftiness. Few animals exceed 3.

Fierceness: Similarly this Trait tends to be greater amongst predators than amongst their prey. Some creatures can be particularly nasty fighters for their life or when defending their young. However here we are talking about ferociousness in 'normal' situations. Fierceness is 1 amongst simple, often domesticated, animals (cattle, sheep etc) and 2 for other non-predators. 3 or higher is the level for hunters and killers.

Alertness: This Trait is around 3 for most creatures. There tends to be the least variation in this Trait as predators need to be able to find, hear or scent their prey and animals near the lower end of the food chain need to be aware of hunters in the vicinity. A large number of creatures have a limited ability in

one of their senses but invariably make up for the lack in having heightened ability in another sense, such as

Mole who has poor eyesight but exceptional 'touch' (hairs on his sensitive nose).

Abilities

Whatever the creature is good at becomes an Ability in TftW. Again, exercise caution here. Just about all creatures can stay afloat and paddle to the bank when tossed into water, but many wouldn't choose to go for a swim, for example. You need to come up with around two or three abilities. If the creature has a high total for his Traits, then he might only have one Ability.

Lores

Wherever a creature is normally found becomes a Lore. Some will have more than one Lore or a choice of Lores, because they range far and wide (birds) or because they have a specialist Lore (Mole).

Finishing up

If your final creature has Traits adding up to somewhere between 13 and 16, two or three Abilities and a Lore or two, then you are probably somewhere near the mark. Compare your finished version to the other creatures of the same type. If it doesn't look out of place, then you more than likely have it. Be careful. Don't listen to everything your player says about a creature if he wants you to design his favourite for him. Do your own research and make sure you stay within these guidelines.

Beware

Something else to be wary of when designing the characteristics of a new creature is that you will often find reference works that cite examples of animals performing extraordinary feats outside of what would seem typical for the creature in question. Treat such references with a degree of care and where the example quoted is clearly out of the ordinary then ignore it, or consider it more in the terms that this creature was no





ordinary example of the animal and represents a more unusual one, maybe even a player-creature!

Example - Designing a Bat: A player is particularly keen to play a Bat character and has convinced the kind GK to allow her to play one since it is well within keeping with the game, and should be an easy one to integrate into the Tale. Reading some books about bats, the GK sees that there are rather a few species of bat in the world -about 900 in all. There are however only 18 types in Britain, and the following seems about standard.

Bat is a small flying mammal that lives on insects. Bat has virtually useless eyes, however this is more than made up for by 'sonar'. Bat relies upon sound impulses, which she emits and then detects the rebound with her expanded ears, after the sound waves bounce off an object. Bat has inferior flight to birds -the wing membrane does not repair well when damaged. Bat is also virtually useless when on the ground because she has had to sacrifice the use of her hind legs. She does however cling well onto vertical surfaces.

Bat is about the size of Mouse making her Sturdiness 1 (1 -3" on the table). There is nothing to suggest Bat is particularly strong so Toughness is also 1 (indeed there are grounds for reducing Toughness, but nothing should start lower than 1). Nimbleness should be 2 as Bat is next to helpless on the ground, and not as agile as a bird in flight. As a predator (albeit of insects) Craftiness is 2, and equally her Fierceness should be 2. Bat does however have an excellent Alertness with her sonar and expanded ears so there are certainly grounds for giving her a 4 in Alertness. This gives a Trait total of 13 which is fine for a PC.

With regard to her Abilities, Bat naturally gets Fly and a choice of any Lore. Track (using sonar) becomes the last Ability of Bat, making her a well rounded creature fit for adventure once the player has spent 5 points to increase attributes or buy a new ability.

Animal points totals

Some role-playing games require some sort of game 'balance', where characters start off equal. TftW isn't about that, its about what makes for an interesting story. If a player wants to simply play the most powerful character then this may not be the game for that player. However, if you really want to look at some sort of system for determining which creature is the strongest then this may interest you. (The animals were not created using this system, I hasten to add, it simply worked out this way after we had already designed the creatures based on the framework presented previously).

First of all, each Trait costs a number of points equal to the next level, so a Trait of 1 costs 1, to get that trait to 2 costs 3 points (1+2 =3) and so on.

Here are the points costs

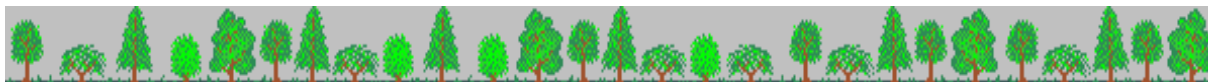
Trait level	Points Cost	Trait level	Points Cost
1	1	6	21
2	3	7	28
3	6	8	35
4	10	9	44
5	15	10	54

So, for example Frog's Traits cost a total of 22 points (1+3+6+3+3+6).

Each new Ability, Lore or Skill costs 5 points. Wisdom costs 10. Arguably Fly should cost 10 too. Things like Hedgehog's spines and an adder's venom also cost 5 points each.

So Frog has three Abilities and a Lore for a total cost 4x5=20. Combined with his Traits the points cost of Frog is 42. Remarkably, all the player-creatures, apart from Gnome (who is a special case) fall within the range 40 to 45 points in the main, using this system. You could use this system if you like, to ensure any new creature that you design for player-characters is balanced compared to the others.





Here are the points costs for all of *The Creatures of The Way*

Creature	Points cost
Frog	42
Gnome	61
Hedgehog	47
Mole	40
Mouse	42
Rabbit	45
Robin	43
Shrew	45
Sparrow	41
Squirrel	44
Toad	42
Vole	44
Water Vole	40
Bat	41

Here are the points costs for the *Creatures of The Bane* as well as the other creatures of *The Wood*

Creature	Points cost
Adder	54
Buzzard	98
Crow/Rook	68
Fox	116
Grass Snake	73
Kestrel	74
Pike	95
Rat	59
Stoat	74
Weasel	64
Badger	103
Deer	236
Hare	64
Lizard	49
Newt	39
Otter	89
Owl	97
Swan	132





EXPERIENCE FROM ADVENTURES

Experience points

In most role-playing games there are rewards available for the characters for succeeding in their quests and adventures. In TtTW, the rewards come in the form of additional character or 'experience' points, that can be spent in the same way as the five points available when creating a character. See the following table

* For the Toughness and Sturdiness Traits, there is a maximum level dependent upon the creature type.

Characteristic	Points needed
Trait*	A number of points equal to the new level
A new Ability	5
Wisdom	10
A new Lore	5
A new Gnome Skill	5
The Way**	A number of points equal to the new level

** For *The Way*, the maximum is 5.

How many points to award

This really depends on the GK and how quickly she wants the characters in her Tale to advance. I suggest around 3-5 points per completed adventure, maybe with 1 or 2 additional points if the characters did spectacularly well or overcame a particularly dangerous adversary.

You could even award points based upon the enemies encountered, using the tables on page 40. For example, you could say that 10% of the points cost for the animal (round down) is earned as experience, to be divided

amongst the player-creatures, for defeating or overcoming the animal (so an adder would be worth 5 points and a fox would be worth 11).

Animal Lords

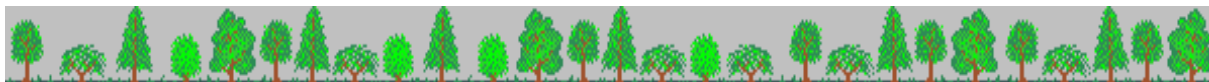
There is a Lord for each type of animal in *The Wood*, except Gnome. The Lord is the only one entitled to speak to Lord Stag at Gatherings and it is the Lords who decide what should be done in times of peril. Animal Lords demand respect and, if they don't already have it, gain Intimidate for free. If they do already have it, they gain a bonus of +1 on any Intimidate checks they make. Animal Lords have other advantages and privileges, depending on the type of animal they are.

To become an Animal Lord is as simple as making a challenging to the current Lord. An animal can only challenge a Lord of the same type. There is only ever one Animal Lord of each type in *The Wood*. The challenge is always to the death.

An Animal Lord almost always has maximum Toughness and Sturdiness, the Tooth & Claw Ability and a higher than normal Fierceness. They will certainly have *The Way* (or *The Bane*) at 2 or higher. They are hard to defeat, which is how they got to be Lord in the first place.

There is nothing stopping player-creatures issuing The Challenge, but they need to have gained quite a few experience points before even thinking about it.





GLOSSARY

Animal Lord: Every type of creature is ruled by a Lord, who has gained his or her position by the right of The Challenge. Some Lords are very relaxed with their subjects and their demands upon them and others, particularly those of *The Bane*, are tyrannical.

Bane, The: An evil that is opposed to *The Way* and seems to be growing, particularly in the Tanglebriars. It causes creatures to kill without reason.

Brightwood: The main wooded area, where most of the creatures live and where the Meeting Stone is.

Clearing, The: The location of The Meeting Stone, where Lord Stag is often found and where the Gatherings take place.

Challenge, The: The age old tradition of rule by combat. The winner of the Challenge becomes the Lord.

Deep Pond: Where the Pike can often be found. The place holds a fascination for Frog and some other creatures as the water is cool and refreshing.

Farm: An evil-smelling place where *The Bane* seems to be prevalent. Man lives there, with his slaves the Roaring Dragon, the cat and dog as well as the sheep, cows and chickens that he has bent to his will.

Frogmarsh: A dank, dark and misty place where Frog and other creatures of a furless type gather to make weird noises at night time.

Gathering, The: The meeting of the Animal Lords, where any issues are raised or when danger threatens.

Hard River, The: Another place where *The Bane* is strong. The Roaring Owl swoops down to kill any unwise creature that tries to cross.

Man: A creature with only two legs. Most are terrifying, but some creatures who know Man better believe there are some that are not touched by *The Bane*.

Meadow: A quiet sunny place, where the rabbits live. It doesn't provide enough cover

for many creatures of *The Wood* and Man comes here too often.

Meeting Stone: An ancient dolmen, which has the quality, when Lord Stag clashes his antlers against it, of sending reverberations out across the whole of *The Wood*. It is used to call the Gatherings.

Roaring Dragon (Tractor): The creature that live in the Farm and scours the fields relentlessly to kill any-creature that gets in its way.

Roaring Owl (Car): Related (surely?) to The Roaring Dragon. It scours the Hard River for its prey. Some say there are numerous Roaring Owls.

Rookery: A line of old trees where the rooks and a few crows gather to work their evil.

Tanglebriars: An old, dark and dense part of *The Wood*, where rats, stoats, adders and other creatures of *The Bane* dwell.

Thunderers (shotguns): Things that the Man carries around to kill creatures by the power of *The Bane*.

Truce, The: During the Gathering and for a short while afterwards, all creatures are safe from their predators. However, lately there have been rumours that some creatures, strongly tainted by *The Bane*, have been ignoring The Truce.

Way (of The Wood), The: The ebb and flow of life and death, the natural order of things, the 'spirit' or power of *The Wood*.





MAP OF THE WOOD





THREE TALES FROM THE WOOD

Oakfellow and the Gypsies

Overview for the GK

A small group of gypsies have set up their camp in *The Wood*. One of the gypsies, the 'Old Mother' had heard tales of a 'Little Man' in these woods and had set her son the task of finding and capturing it. After several patient days searching, the son Orlando found Oakfellow's tree-den and set a trap for him. The trap worked and soon poor Oakfellow found himself in a cage in one of the gypsy caravans. The simple idea of this scenario is that the PC's must find out what has happened to Oakfellow and then make a daring rescue attempt.

Oakfellow's disappearance

How the PC's find out that Oakfellow is gone is up to you and your group. If there is a Gnome in your group or if one of the PC's is friendly with Oakfellow, then he could discover that Oakfellow's home is empty and doesn't appear to have been lived in for a few days. If not, it could simply be noted by one of the Animal Lord's (of the same type of creature as one of the PC's) that Oakfellow didn't attend a recent Gathering (he never misses a Gathering) and that Lord will ask his fellow to investigate. Else, the whole group could be together for some reason and stumble upon Oakfellow's tree, and discover that there are signs of a disturbance in the vicinity.

Nosing around

The PC's may want to look around Oakfellow's tree-den or the immediate area around the oak tree for clues. What they find is very disturbing. The den hasn't apparently been occupied for a few days although it has signs of interrupted use (half-eaten food and so

on). Outside the den, characters can find signs of trampled grass, snapped twigs and branches and so on. Also, with a straightforward awareness check, an odd thing can be found squashed into the soil. It defies description to those who fail their moderate Man Lore check, other than it isn't large and it smells of *The Bane*. Those who succeed, realise it's something that men use to prove to animals that they have tamed fire (it's a cigarette end). There is a comparatively easy trail of Man paw-prints leading away from Oakfellow's den, in the direction of The Hard River.

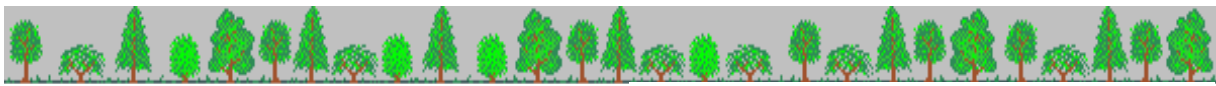
An unwelcome meeting

At the edge of the gypsy encampment (which is located near where the Hard River crosses The River (i.e. near the bridge) the PC's will come across a small group of foraging rats (in numbers, have one rat for every PC in the group). They have come from across the Hard River seeking food, which seems to be in abundance here. They are just planning how to get at it when the PC's stumble into them.

The way you play this encounter is up to you. If the PC's had sent ahead a scout (say a bird or a mouse) then the scout might spot the rats without being noticed and report back to the group. In this case the group might avoid the rats altogether, at this stage. If the group bump into the rats as a whole, the rats will become interested in what the PC's are up to and will ask questions. They will be tight-lipped about what they are up to themselves. They could be intimidated to go away, if there is a PC in the group scary enough to do that. The rats are not particularly brave, but they will hang around a short distance away to keep an eye on things.

However, the rats have been here a while and





they do have information. They saw The Man (Orlando) and saw him take a sack with something moving inside it into one of the caravans and, when he came out, the sack was empty (the rats have Man Lore). They won't pass on the information about which caravan it was very readily or without something in return.

What do the rats want?

There is a dog in the camp, that appears to be a trained ratter. They need a diversion, so that they can make a dash for the food (which is actually in the 'discard pile' near the edge of the camp, close to where the rats have been lurking. The dog can be seen not far from the pile (which smells foully, but hey, that's rats for you).

In fact the dog is tethered and can't quite reach the pile, so if the PC's are crafty enough and scout the position out, they will be able to deal with this part with little danger.

The horses

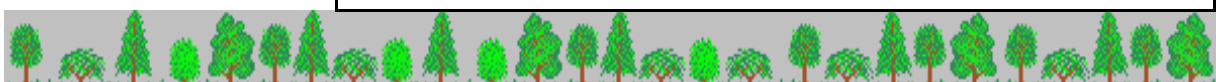
There are some horses tethered nearby, again at the edge of the trees so these are approachable without having to leave the cover of the undergrowth. They are reasonably talkative for beasts enslaved to Man, although they are not much interested in what goes on in the encampment. They do explain that the gypsies are generally animal friends, except the one who owns the dog. He is cruel to his dog and to the horses. This man is of course Orlando.

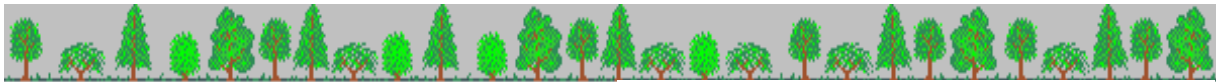
Finding Oakfellow

The PC's cannot see Oakfellow out in the open. That means he is likely to be inside one of the caravans. If they haven't found out from the rats which one it is and one of the PC's has Wisdom, he could find out that way. Otherwise, they will have to scout around inside the encampment a little. If they are not sneaky enough (use Hide) they might set the dog off. He is a ferocious little terrier. The dog is tethered near to the caravan where Oakfellow is being held.

Getting into the caravan

Characters could go in through the window if they are capable of flying or up the steps and through the door if they have to rely on their paws. They have to negotiate the dog too. Assuming they have a reasonable plan to get in, allow this to happen, especially if





they think of a good use of *The Way* to do so. If they dither too much or make too much noise, then the dog will certainly go for them.

Inside the caravan

Once inside, they will find that Oakfellow has been put in a large parrot cage, which is on a small table, in a cluttered interior. It's comparatively easy for creatures with good Nimbleness to get up to the table, but getting the cage open is a bit of a problem. A hard Man Lore check is needed to figure out a way of opening the cage. If they fail or again, if they dither too much, the dog will start barking outside. This will bring 'The Man' (Orlando) to investigate, with a cudgel in his hand (thinking there are thieves about). (Note: If the group have no Man Lore, then Oakfellow can tell them what to do, but assume that this takes a little time to explain and treat it as if they failed their Man Lore check).

The getaway

Once the group have got the cage open they need to get to the trees, probably past both the dog and The Man (depending on whether they were noticed earlier). This may take a few Flee checks and maybe even an Intimidation check on the dog, if he corners one of the PC's. This is pretty much a free-for-all, so let the players come up with some good ideas or help them escape.

The rats, again

However, when and if they get back to the relative safety of the trees, the rats are still there. If one of the PC's was wounded earlier (or if not Oakfellow certainly got injured in his struggle with The Man), then the rats will become frenzied at the scent of blood. They will give chase and attack them. If the PC's manage to outwit, outfight or simply outrun the rats then they will have no further trouble on their way back to Oakfellow's home.

Wrapping up

The gypsies move off the following day. If the PC's managed to get away with Oakfellow, then everyone is happy and the Gnome will throw a party. Each character will receive 4 experience points.

If they didn't save Oakfellow, then he will still be with the gypsies when they move off. The characters will receive 2 experience points each. There is a chance that they will catch up with Oakfellow later on. For example, if the PC's go on to do the *Wolf's Bane* adventure that takes them to the sea, they could find the gypsy caravan there and maybe attempt another rescue.

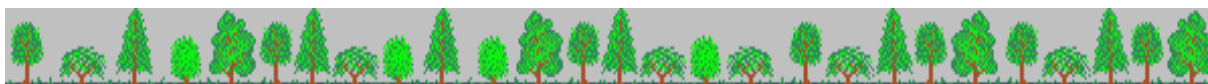
Brute (the dog)

T0	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	T	h	e
Bane								
6	8	2	2	4	3	2		

Abilities

Intimidate, Man Lore, Tooth & Claw, Track
Brute is a trained ratter and get +1 on any check where rats are involved. If he smells blood and goes into a frenzy, he will always attack rats first if they are nearby.





Adventure along the Riverbank

Overview

The River that feeds *The Wood* has been drying up for a couple of days. This is a cause for concern as The River brings life to *The Wood*. The PC's will be selected to investigate the problem. They will have to cross the much-feared Hard River and will have an encounter with a nosey sparrow, a nasty adder and some unpleasant rooks. Their journey will bring them to a building site, where the men have packed up and little work has been done (the developers have run into financial problems). Unfortunately some of the barrels they had stacked up near the riverbank have fallen in, causing a blockage and creating a mucky pond on the site. Oh, and a colony of rats live near the site too, who must be negotiated with in order to remove the blockage.

The Gathering

Redflank, the Lord Stag has called a Gathering of the creatures of *The Wood* by crashing his mighty antlers against the Meeting Stone. Lordly representatives of all of the animals of *The Wood* are present -Fox, Mouse, Weasel, Squirrel, Badger, Rat, Otter, Vole, Crow and all the rest. The PC's will be hiding at the back, behind all of the Animal Lords. The Truce is of course in force so all of the creatures are safe until the sun rises in the morning for it is now night-time. Redflank brings the excited chatterings to a close with one further crash of his powerful antlers.

When all is quiet he begins. "You will all no doubt be aware that over the last few weeks the level of water in the stream which feeds *The Wood* has been falling".

There are a few nods and worried glances at this point especially from Sleek the Otter Lord and Wash the Lord of Water Voles.

"Well, the water in the stream is now down to a mere trickle. I went there to take a look myself only this dusk-time, at the request of Lord Sleek, and I have to report that the signs are not good. Certainly it is my view

that if something is not done about this worrying situation shortly the balance will be upset and *The Wood* will suffer"

Redflank waits until the uproar subsides and then continues. "What we need is a volunteer or two to investigate the problem. It will no doubt mean a long and hazardous journey upstream across the Hard River (a few horrified gasps from some of the creatures at this point) and further afield than many of you will have ventured before. WHO WILL GO?"

At the last three words the PC's will feel Redflank's eyes boring into them as other creatures cringe away from his gaze. Once the PC's have 'volunteered' the remaining creatures will shout "Hoorah!" in relief that some creature other than themselves is going and then disappear into the undergrowth or the branches of the trees around the clearing.

Redflank will then wish the PC's luck, and advise them to go as soon as possible, and that when they get to the Hard River they should cross quickly and stop for nothing even if they feel the eyes of the Roaring Owl burning into them.

The drying streambed

The PC's will presumably head straight for the Riverbank and they will see that is down to a very worrying trickle. The muddy and dried out river bed reveals dead fish, bits of washed up twigs and some Man-things, which both look and smell a little of *The Bane*.

(Note: If you are feeling really mean you could throw in an encounter with a fox or a couple of stoats approaching the PC's and taunting them a little. However The Truce is still in force so there is little for them to worry about at the moment although the GK could remind the players that it is very nearly dawn by now).

The journey upstream

Following the course of the water upstream the PC's will reach the Hard River late in the day. Those with Man Lore will begin to rec-





ognize the strange and rather horrid smell as they approach. Others will begin to feel uncomfortable and more than a little intimidated by it. Those that have been stuffing their faces a lot during the day may feel queasy.

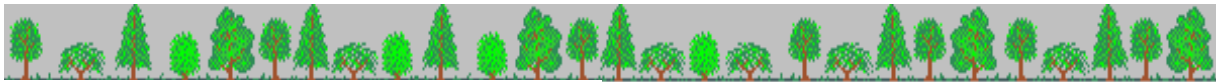
Nosing around the area the PC's may notice that the River actually goes underneath the Hard River through a kind of tunnel. Any who make a straightforward River Lore check will realize that in this tunnel is the home of an old and surly Otter called Chaser. So the PC's are faced with a choice here.

They could cross the dreaded Hard River, or they could try the tunnel underneath and risk upsetting a large ferocious creature.

Crossing the Hard River

If they choose to cross the Hard River you should describe the unnaturalness of the ground nearby and the decaying feel to the grass and weeds growing at its edge. If they nibble any vegetation nearby it will taste foul. Once onto the cold surface of the Hard River they will feel open and vulnerable. There is no cover and any-creature used to





being able to burrow to escape predators will be most anxious that they cannot even scratch the surface of this terrible place.

As they cross the ground will begin to rumble and a loud horrendous noise will fill the air as around the bend in the distance comes the terrible Roaring Owl. If the PC's cross individually, roll randomly for which one is crossing when the car comes.

It is dusk and so the eyes are burning brightly from the Roaring Owl. Play up the sounds, the tremendous vibrations underpaw and the wicked stench of *The Bane*. The car is intimidating (6) and opposed intimidation rolls are called for. If the PC's win (unlikely) they will safely speed across. If they lose they will stand still in abject terror as the Roaring Owl bears down on them. PCs with Man Lore may add +2 to their dice rolls, as they will be more aware of these things. The car has a 1 in 6 chance of hitting any PC standing still. Using a point of *The Way* will save any unfortunate creature about to be squashed.

Going under the Hard River

If the PC's choose to go through the tunnel (under the bridge) they will most likely meet Chaser the Otter. As expected he is not in a good mood. The main reason this dusk for his surliness is that there is insufficient water left in the River for him to have a good swim or to catch any decent fish. He is therefore hungry and might be tempted by a small mouse or a frog or something.

The PC's should have a chance of getting to the bottom of his problem by talking and role-play and certainly those with River Lore will have a good idea why he is in an even worse mood than usual. If they explain their quest to Chaser he will let them have passage, but if they upset him even more he will not let them pass.

Into the lands of Man

Having crossed the Hard River, the PC's will be in the dangerous lands of Man. They will mainly be traversing open fields and meadows. By the Riverbank there will be enough

cover to hide themselves in so they would be better off staying close to it.

The day will be largely uneventful but late on a nosey sparrow called Chitter will spot them and fly down and start to ask annoying questions. She will flit about their heads in an excited fashion and ask "Where are you all going?", "What are a strange mixture of creatures like you doing travelling together?", "Where have you come from?" and "That's a long way isn't it?" etc, etc. The PC's would be best not to tell this talkative sparrow of their quest or it may spell trouble later. Indeed they would probably do well to scare her off altogether.

A slippery encounter

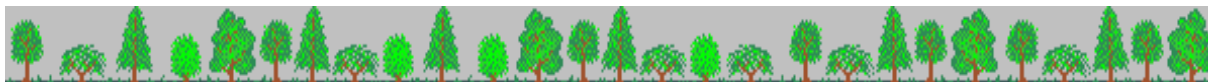
At dusk or nightfall, there will be an altogether more dangerous encounter with Flick the Adder. He is hungry and on the hunt for easy prey. One of the PC's may well seem like easy prey. Flick is not daft and he will wait until one of the PC's is alone, which is bound to happen at this point as they are all likely to have different eating and sleeping habits. Whilst Flick is lurking, give the PC a chance to sense his presence before he strikes. Flick will first of all try to intimidate the PC but will then go for the kill. Other PC's nearby might hear some noises (Roll Moderate Alertness on the Task Difficulty Table) and (hopefully) and come to investigate.

Flick will not go after a Hedgehog if there is one in the group, and if a Hedgehog comes to the aid of the attacked PC, Flick will probably not hang around. He may make a few choice and sly remarks before he slinks off though. Either way a concerted show of strength by the PC's or a 'nip' result in Tooth & Claw will be enough to see off this mean old snake.

A large rookery

Early in the morning as the PC's continue their journey they will spot dark shapes in the line of trees edging the field ahead. They have come across a rookery of about 50 birds. Most are asleep and not too bothered





by the approaching creatures. However a few of them, namely Blackhood, Darkbeak, Beadeye and Ragwing are looking for a bit of excitement and these approaching creatures look like easy meat to the rooks. You could have the PC's make hard Alertness rolls to spot the fact that 4 of the rooks have noticed them and are only pretending to be asleep. The rooks will swoop down upon the PC's and attempt to peck, harass and bully them. They conform to standard rook characteristics.

If the PC's are strong enough (if for example they have a Hedgehog in their midst, or if they collectively have reasonably high Toughness, Sturdiness and some have Tooth & Claw ability) then you could allow this to develop into a fight. If the PC's are smaller and weaker then you should allow another escape, perhaps letting them spot a thorny bush to hide under or a hole for them to escape into. This is a potentially dangerous encounter and the GK should be prepared to let PC's use *The Way* and to listen to any reasonable suggestions from the players as otherwise they may not survive. Even Chaser the Otter could turn up and scare the rooks away if they are getting the better of the PC's.

The building site

Toward the late afternoon, the PC's will begin to encounter an evil stench and this will become stronger the more they press on. It smells of *The Bane*, of Hard Rivers, of Roaring Owls and of Man. Beneath it all is another faintly recognisable smell (make a hard Alertness roll to discern that the smell is of rats).

Looking ahead the PC's can now see that the ground has all been churned up as if the Mother of all Moles has been digging here. Amidst all of this churned earth are bits of shiny stuff and twigless branches stuck in the ground and other indescribable objects scattered around. Those who succeed Moderate Man Lore checks will recognise the fences and signposts as ways of keeping Men out (or in!) and the shiny things as cans and bot-

tles (sometimes with nice sticky-sweet-watery-nectary stuff in them) and other bits of Man rubbish. As the PC's approach they will see that there is a vast pool of water spreading over the churned up ground in the middle of the site, turning everything to mud and muck. Out of the pool or lake of water comes just a trickle of water down the streambed. It is now easy to see that some of the larger Man things are lying in the stream blocking off the flow of water.

The rat colony

As the PC's get closer and continue to ponder what can be done, a group of rats will approach them from all sides, from tunnels and hidey holes and from behind mounds and Man litter.

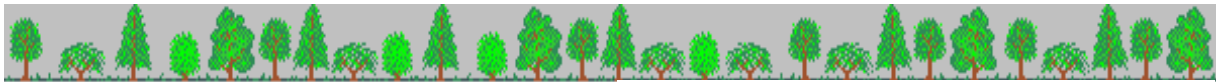
Blacktooth, who is The Rat King's henchrat will be at their head, followed by Redeye and Greyfur. Blacktooth will begin to question the PC's aggressively trying to intimidate them at the same time. Any PC's that are not intimidated (or intimidate him back) will cause Blacktooth to be agitated as he is not used to this. He is certainly not used to being questioned himself, and will show clearly his agitation if this happens.

(Note: Blacktooth is aspiring to be The King Rat but he is painfully aware that he is too weak to challenge the current occupier of that position. He does have a moderately large number of supporters amongst the rats in the colony and wouldn't be adverse to a civil war to usurp the present incumbent from the 'throne'. He may see the PC's as a way to shortcut his challenge for the leadership especially if there is a tough looking Hedgehog in their group. It really all depends on the PC's and how they approach the conversation with Blacktooth. Essentially this is a great point for the PC's to really role play their characters).

The King Rat

If the PC's insist, they will be taken before the King Rat. Blacktooth won't volunteer to take them though, preferring to keep them away from King Rat. However, at some





point a messenger from King Rat will turn up to have a word with Blacktooth (news travels fast in the colony and King Rat has eyes everywhere) and to ask him to bring the visitors to him.

The PC's will be led around a huge winding network of tunnels and twisting passages (that will require a hard Tunnel Lore check to negotiate without a guide) to the King Rat's cavernous lair. He is the largest and fattest rat the PC's will have ever seen. He is surrounded by mouse slaves, who are feeding him and grooming him. There are several rat bodyguards inside and at the entrance to his lair.

Dealing with the rats

There is a large network of tunnels in and around the site. There are about 100 or more rats in the colony. Whilst the rats have no real reason to kill the PC's they could easily do so, so there is always an element of danger in any negotiations.

If it doesn't occur to the PC's, you could make it apparent that there are more than enough rats here to clear the blockage in the River, but that they need to have something to negotiate with. The henchrat Blacktooth could probably gather enough rats to do the job, if the characters side with him. King Rat could certainly get enough of his minions to remove the blockage, but what is he after?

Negotiations could go several different ways. Perhaps the PC's could side with Blacktooth to help overthrow King Rat. Perhaps they could tell King Rat that Blacktooth is planning a rebellion? Other possibilities exist. For instance, King Rat is looking to move the colony to a better spot. If the PC's tell him where they come from, he will get very interested. If they mention The Farm, then he will definitely help out, for information on where to find this Farm.

There are many ways this could go and it depends on any good ideas that come from your players as well as maybe some helpful nudges if they become stuck for ideas.

The Conclusion

Once they have successfully persuaded the rats to unblock the River, the home journey is straightforward (unless you want to add further adventures on the way back).

You can award some points to be spent by the players on their creatures to improve their attributes or to buy new abilities. There are 5 to 7 points available per character for concluding this adventure successfully (as it was a very dangerous one).

(Note: You could always use this scenario as a way to introduce the next adventure perhaps the Rat King had a task for the PC's to carry out in exchange for his help in unblocking the River. Maybe Greyfur heard about *The Wood* and decides to follow the PC's back (with some of his own followers) and then starts to cause trouble in *The Wood*, or maybe one of the PC's becomes addicted, like Redeye, to beer and would even go off on his own to the lands of Man to find more. There are many possibilities).

The creatures met along the way:

Chaser the otter

T0	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Way	The Bane
6	7	3	2	3	3	1	1

Abilities

River Lore, Swim, Track, Tooth & Claw

A grumpy and hungry old otter. He will help the PC's if they explain their mission to him (and may even show up suddenly to help out against the rooks if the PC's get into any trouble at the rookery).

Chitter the sparrow

T0	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Way
1	2	3	2	3	4	1

Abilities

Field Lore, Wood Lore, Fly

An annoying and nosey bird. He will be a pest and a nuisance until scared off.

Flick the adder

T0	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Bane
2	4	3	3	3	3	2

Abilities

Hide, Intimidate, Field Lore, Tooth & Claw

Not a pleasant creature, Flick is however very wary of hedgehogs.





Darkbeak, Blackhood, Beadeye, Ragwing (the four rooks)

T0	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Bane
4	5	2	2	3	3	1

Abilities

Fly, Tooth & Claw, Man Lore, Field Lore
Loud bullies.

Snaketail (King Rat)

T0	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Bane
5	6	2	3	4	3	2

Abilities

Intimidate, Climb, Man Lore, Tunnel Lore, Tooth & Claw

Snaketail is now quite a venerable rat who has had a long life and fought hard. He really doesn't want any more problems that give him a hard life and knows that one of his subordinates is looking eagerly at his throne. He would appreciate some help in determining which one of his Henchrats it is and flushing him out.

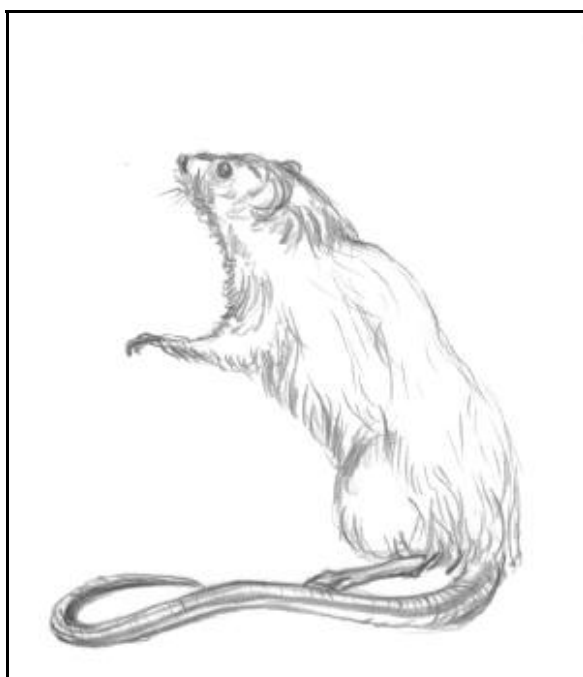
Blacktooth (Henchrat)

TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Bane
4	5	3	3	3	3	3

Abilities

Man Lore, Climb, Tooth & Claw, Tunnel Lore, Intimidate

Blacktooth is a very sneaky Rat, who is not above using devious means to further his own ambitions and progress in the rat colony. He has a number of rats who are dedicated to his cause and several others who might be ready to side with him but are less fanatical.



Redeye (Henchrat)

TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Bane
4	4	3	2	3	2	1

Abilities

Man Lore, Climb, Tooth & Claw, Tunnel Lore
Redeye has acquired a taste for alcohol and constantly searches the site for cans with drops of beer left in them. Since his problem started his eyes have reddened (hence his name) and his desire to be the leader of the rat colony has lessened. He could probably only be certain of calling upon help from one or two old friends if needed but could be a useful ally if he could be sobered up for a while.

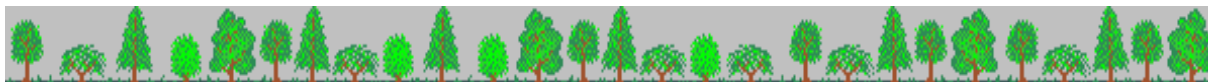
Greyfur (Henchrat)

TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Bane
4	4	3	2	3	4	1

Abilities

Man Lore, Climb, Tooth & Claw, Tunnel Lore
Greyfur is a young rat but possibly destined for great things and favoured by Snaketail. He has several strong allies amongst the rats in the colony and is not satisfied to continue living on this site, but rather fancies sending scouting parties to look for another place to live. If he hears of *The Wood* he will want to learn all he can with a view to taking as many rats as he can to establish themselves there.





Wolfs Bane

Overview for the GK

The simple premise of this Tale is that a Wolf has recently escaped from the local zoo and has made its way to *The Wood*. The PC's are to investigate what it is and find a means of getting rid of it. This will ultimately lead the PC's on a long journey further away from their homes than they have ever been before, to the fabled Sea to find a rare plant that only grows there. The plant is believed to have powers to dispel the great beast that has invaded *The Wood*.

Setting the scene

Maybe one or two of the PC's will see this huge shaggy beast loping through the trees. Maybe some-creature else will spot a carcass of one of Redflank's herd of deer (and there are no animals in *The Wood* big enough to bring down a deer!) Some nights there is a terrific howling through the area sending shivers down the spines of many a creature - even so that badgers and foxes are scared. Several of the smaller creatures will be terrified out of their wits and *The Wood* is under a palpable pall of doom. No-creature wants to set paw outside its den for fear of the beast. Some-creature has to end this reign of terror. The PC's are just right for the job. Their respective Lords will ask them to look into it. Stag is afraid to call a Gathering, for fear that the Beast doesn't respect the Truce and slays every-creature in attendance.

Asking around

The PC's will need to visit some of the more intimidating creatures in *The Wood*, to get their information. You are welcome to role-play the encounters in as menacing a way as you like, with lots of licking of lips from The Fox Lord and maybe have The Owl Lord still picking at the bones of a small rodent when the PC's arrive.

Nobody knows what the monster is except the following, who have their own ideas

Owl - using Wisdom, the Owl Lord Shadow-Wing, has learned that this is a

'Wolf' from a place far off across the sea. He also states that many years ago, in the dim-distant past, wolves ruled *The Wood*, but that their enemies were the cunning foxes of those long gone days.

Gnome (Oakfellow or Grizzlegruff perhaps?) - The long-lived forgetful Gnome, may remember a sea plant that made a smell that was unpleasant to Wolf-kind and made them go away. He suggests a visit to either or both of The Owl Lord and The Fox Lord, if they haven't visited them already.

Fox - using Wood Lore (a formidable roll for the most information) the Fox Lord will recall ancient tales passed down through generations of foxes, that in bygone times wolves and foxes used to battle for supremacy. Foxes had numbers and cunning, wolves had strength and size. When fox cunning had all but wrested *The Wood* from the wolves, there was a strong Wolf Lord who came down from the far North. However, cunning Reynard, Lord of Foxes at that time, used the mythical *Sea-Onion* to rid the Wood of Greysnout, The Last Wolf.

A journey to the sea

Few creatures in *The Wood* know of the 'Sea'. Any with Beach Lore will. Those with River Lore may do (Hard roll). However, birds fly far and wide. If the PC's re-visit the Owl, it will not be there. If they wait for it, it will come back some time but is hungry and a bit aggressive - small creatures beware!

The other birds that fly far and wide are the rooks, who live in the Rookery, near the Farm. A visit to them may prove fruitful. PC's may come up with other ways to discover where the Sea is. Don't make this too difficult - you want them to go there, after all it's where the adventure is at!

Encounters along the way

On their long and arduous trek from *The Wood*, following the river to the Sea, the PC's will have the following encounters. As usual, how you and your players deal with them is largely up to you and how you like to role-play.





A Fisherman – Any-creature interested in grubs and maggots (Mole, Shrew and Hedgehog especially) will love the small box by the side of The River that is just full of really lovely juicy ones. What the fisherman does if he sees them is up to you.

Water Voles – some feisty water voles (one for each PC in the group - use standard water vole stats) who tell the PC's to go around their territory. However they are either easily intimidated or ready to flee if involved in a serious tussle.

Little Boys – a gang of boys with a home-made raft-boat. They float around on it a bit then they pull it ashore and run off home for dinner (or whatever). PC's could possibly use this to continue their journey – especially if there is a Gnome amongst them.

The Town - a particularly nasty area, where it smells of *The Bane* and the water tastes foul. Any-creature with Man Lore knows this place for what it is. Others find it foul and intimidating. If you are really mean you could set up an encounter with a small dog or cat.

Sand Dunes – not far beyond the town are the sand dunes, that lead on down to the beach. Amongst the dunes lurks an adder who will attack the smallest member of the group. Use standard adder stats.

Beach Crab – This could be a strange meeting. The crab is being harassed by a seagull who is trying to turn him over to get at his underside. The crab is scuttling this way and that trying to get away. If the PC's are brave enough they could make the seagull fly away, for easier prey. The crab, called Pinchme, will be grateful to PC's if they save him from harassment and will help them find what they are looking for.

The Sea Onion, is a form of sea kelp, with a very strange smell. Even the PC's don't like it much. This needs to be taken back to *The Wood*. Because the sea kelp smells so bad, animals encountered on the way back will keep away.

The return home

If you wish you could add an adventure on the return journey. One idea, if the PC's failed to rescue Oakfellow in the first adventure (*Oakfellow and the Gypsies*), is to have them come across the gypsy caravans again, as they made their way to the seaside. (Orlando has been charging money to tourists to view *The Little Grey Man*. The Old Mother isn't very happy about this, because she didn't really want to imprison the gnome, she only wanted to talk to him).

Dealing with the wolf

How the PC's then deal with the wolf is up to you. The wolf does not like the smell of the sea kelp, so if they have enough of it, they could for example place it at strategic points around *The Wood*, or go to the wolf's den and put it in there. They might even want to talk to the wolf and tell him there is more where that came from. Let anything that sound reasonable work.

Wrapping up

There is an experience award of 5 points per character (+2 points if they rescue Oakfellow from the gypsies on the way home). They will be hailed as heroes by the creatures of The Wood and Lord Stag will call a special Gathering to honour their exploits to date.

The creatures met along the way

Water voles

TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL
2	3	3	1	3	3

Abilities

Swim, River Lore

Adder

TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Bane
2	4	3	2	3	3	1

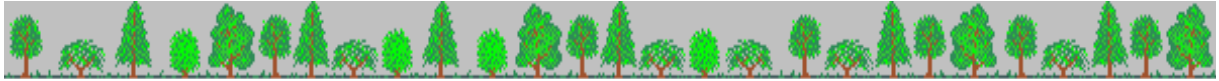
Abilities

Hide, Tooth & Claw, Beach Lore

Pinchme the Crab

TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL
3	3	2	1	3	2





Abilities

Beach Lore, Tooth & Claw, Swim, Pincers, Shell (+2 TO, +3 ST on the *Wound Modifiers Table*).

Pinchme is neither touched by *The Way* or by *The Bane*. He is a very strange creature and speaks very oddly. You could even have characters make Craftiness checks to determine whether they understand him properly.

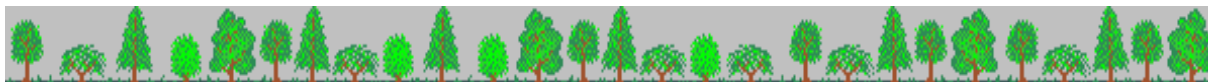
Lupus The Wolf

TO	ST	NI	CR	FI	AL	The Bane
10	10	3	2	5	3	4

Abilities

Tooth & Claw, Track, Man Lore.





CREDITS

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Thanks to all the play testers

Annette Flower, Nigel Uzzell, Janine Uzzell, Alyson George, Robert Watkins, Robert Irwin, Gary Collett, Leigh Wakefield, Phil Chivers, Phil Ratcliffe and members of Innsworth Wargames and Role Playing United Kingdom (IWARPUK).

Recommended Fiction

William Horwood; Duncton Wood, Duncton Quest, Duncton Found, Duncton Tales, Duncton Rising, Duncton Stone (moles)

Gerry Kilworth; Frost Dancers (hares), Hunters Moon (foxes)

A.R. Lloyd; Marshworld, Witchwood, Dragon Pond (weasels)

Denys Watkins Pitchford (B.B); Little Grey Men, Down the Bright Stream (gnomes)

Chris Freddi; Pork & other tales (several different types of animal)

Michael Tod; The Silver Tide, The Second Wave, The Golden Flight (squirrels)

Richard Adams; Watership Down (rabbits)

Aeron Clement; The Cold Moons (badgers)

Brian Carter; Night World (badgers)

Colin Dann; The Animals of Farthing Wood,

In the Grip of Winter, Fox's Feud, Fox Cub Bold, The Siege of White Deer Park, In the Path of Storm, Battle for the Park, Farthing Wood - The Adventure Begins (several different types of animal)

Recommended Non-Fiction

Any good natural history books would be highly useful, but these are some of those consulted when designing Tales from The Wood.

Ron Freethy; Man & Beast, British mammals
Tony Soper; Discovering Animals, British mammals

Roy Brown; Wildlife of Britain, British animals

Rob Hume; Observers Birds, British birds

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