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# The Fauna of Pern

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Not all Earth animals were brought to Pern; some of those which were brought, either did not survive or have mutated since. There are also animals that evolved on Pern, or which were engineered from native species. Thread wiped out many of the larger terrestrial species long before the planet was colonized, but those animals capable of flight or deep burrowing, or those associated with water, rocky areas or the Snowy Wastes, came through largely unscathed. Some have been domesticated but more exist only in the wild. Pernese animals may be identified by a six-limbed body-plan, compound eyes and green blood or ichor; another distinguishing feature is that while the reproductive organs are situated between the hindmost limbs as in Terran animals, the excretory opening is at the end of the tail.

The most important "animal" on Pern, of course, is the dragon, a creature bio-engineered by Kitti Ping Yung from the native firelizards.



Dragons -- intelligent, empathic, and capable of teleportation have long been the saviors of Pern. Through their telepathic/empathic bond with their human riders, Pern has been saved repeatedly from the ravages of Thread, and it is the dragon's gentle nature combined with the imagined thrill of flaming airborne Thread which is the nucleus of our attraction to this fandom.

Like the creatures of Earth myth, dragons are winged quadrupeds who are capable of breathing fire after the digestion of firestone, a coal-like rock. The dragons of Pern are sentient, although not necessarily as intelligent as their human partners. They have a weakness for remembering past events, as well as a difficulty in naming individual humans other than their riders. Dragons have wedge-shaped

heads and faceted, multi-colored eyes, the color of which changes to indicate the creature's current emotional state.

## Dragon Eye Colors Key:

- green & blue -calm, pleasure, sleep
- orange -uncertainty, suspicion
- purple -worry
- red -anger, hunger
- white -danger
- yellow -fear

Dragons have forked tongues, forked tails, strong talons, and strong but delicate-looking wings. Their hide is mammalian rather than reptilian, and is often described as soft, smooth, or suede-like. Dragons need constant oiling and grooming from their riders to keep their hides from being damaged by the abrasion of air-borne particles as well as the shock of cold *between*. Dragons come in the colors green, blue, brown, bronze, and gold. There is some level of variation within those ranges, but no white, black, silver, copper, plaid, polka-dot, or other aberrant colors occur.

**GREENS:** green dragons range in size from 65 to 95 feet. They are female, and will usually Impress only women. Men who Impress green dragons are always homosexual. Female greenriders are either heterosexual or bi-sexual. Green dragons, along with the blues, are considered the least intelligent of all dragons, and are normally characterized as being skittish, flighty, and easily distracted. Greens are the most numerous of the dragons in the Weyr, with approximately half of a Weyr's population being greens. A green may rise to mate as frequently as four times a year or as few as two. Luckily, they are infertile; this is thought to be due to the use of firestone. They are the fastest and most agile of all the dragons, but have noticeably less stamina than the rest.

**BLUES:** blue dragons range in size from 75 to 115 feet. They are male, and will usually Impress only men. A woman who Impresses a blue dragon is always a lesbian. Male blueriders are either heterosexual, homosexual or bi-sexual. Blue dragons are more numerous than browns or bronzes, and while not as fast as the average green, they have more stamina. Blue dragons, along with browns, are the dragon color most likely to have strong Searching instincts.

**BROWNS:** brown dragons range in size from 90 to 130 feet. They are male, and will Impress only heterosexual men. Browns are considerably larger than blues and greens, and are more stable both mentally and physically. They are less common than both blue and greens. Brown dragons, along with blues, are the dragon color most likely to have strong Searching instincts. Brown dragonpairs are often wingseconds.

**BRONZES:** bronze dragons range in size from 125 to 170 feet. They are male, and will only Impress men. Bronzeriders are always heterosexual. Bronzes are the largest and least common of the male dragons, and they compete with one another to mate with the golds of a Weyr. Commonly wingseconds, bronzepairs are nearly always the Wingleaders of the Weyr, and a Weyrleader is always the rider of the bronze who has flown the Weyr's senior queen.

**GOLDS:** gold dragons, or queens, range in size from 145 to 180 feet. They are female, and will Impress only heterosexual women. Golds are the largest and strongest of the dragons, and are often considered the most intelligent. They will rise to mate once or twice a year during a Pass (though it may be less frequently during an Interval), and three months later will lay a clutch of anywhere from six to thirty eggs. Gold dragons do not chew firestone, which would render them sterile; instead, their riders must use agenothree tanks against Threadfall. The senior goldpair is the highest authority within a Weyr, and no dragon will disobey his or her senior queen, regardless of the circumstance.

Dragon eggs take approximately five weeks to hatch after being laid, and a dragon is considered to be at his or her full growth after two years. Dragons are always born knowing their own names; dragon names always end with "th".

Dragons are capable of eating three or four herdbeasts at one meal. Thankfully, dragons only eat once a week or less. A dragon who has digested firestone is capable of flaming up to their own length.

Dragons have the ability to go *between*, a cold dimension of nothingness, which allows them to teleport to any place and/or time. Going *between* to places is dangerous, especially for the untrained, unhealthy, or weary dragonpair. The failure to properly identify the coordinates to where they want to exit *between* can cause a dragonpair to be lost forever, or can cause the dragonpair to teleport into space already filled by another solid mass. In both cases, the results are fatal.

Going *between* to different times is even more dangerous than *betweening* to places. Again, the slightest inaccuracy in the projection of coordinates will doom a dragonpair. The very knowledge that dragons can teleport *between* times as well as places is a secret strictly guarded by goldriders and wingleaders, and any dragonpair caught "timing it" will earn a severe reprimand from the Weyr's Senior Queen.

The empathic bond between rider and dragon is so intimate that a dragon will always go *between* upon the death of his or her rider. Likewise, the majority of dragonriders will die of psychic shock upon the death of their dragon, or suicide rather than face the rest of their lives without their soulmate.



## OTHER ANIMALS

The following are the other animals of Pern which have been developed either in the books or by fandom.

**Bellclaws** - not dissimilar to spiderclaws, bellclaws are more rounded animals with a hard carapace and large, powerful claws with a distinctively bulbous shape. They are highly

regarded as a food animal and are caught for that purpose where they can be found along rivers and coastlines.

**Bigmouths** - these are large -- very large -- fish analogous to Terran basking sharks, feeding on the tiny creatures that drift freely in the waters of Pern's oceans by straining them out of the water using fine gillrakes. Several species of bigmouth, generally smaller than those of the great oceans, are found in the Sea of Asov, where they are hunted by the locals. Not known for their intelligence, bigmouths give birth to live young rather than eggs and are valued meat animals. Bigmouths are usually drab brown or grey-blue in colour and have a horizontally flattened tail.

**Bloodfish** - primitive, heavily armored sea fish, bloodfish attach themselves to a host animal by sinking a long proboscis into its flesh and locking into a blood vessel from which it then feeds. All attached bloodfish are female -- for the first Turn of life the 'fish are free-living, feeding on smaller creatures and the eggs of other fish, and in this phase they are male, maturing quickly and mating with any attached adult female whose host brings them close. Hosts are selected because the bloodfish detects their body heat -- they do not discriminate between Pernese and Terran species, although a bloodfish feeding on a red-blooded host is quickly sterilized and cannot breed. To a small host, a bloodfish is a painful and dangerous parasite, but a larger creature such as a bigmouth or dimglow may barely notice them.

**Blurwings** - These are the smallest of wherries, found in the tropics of the Southern Continent. Barely the length of a man's finger, blurwings have brilliantly colored plumage and long pointed beaks that they use to probe flowers in search of nectar, hovering in front of the bloom on tiny wings. Males feed only on nectar, but females have slightly more varied if lesser known diet - in order to produce eggs they must find a more protein-rich food source during the breeding season and so use their long beaks to take blood from beach-breeding longnecks or any other large green-blooded animal they can find.

**Bonefish** - large marine fish with bony nodules and scales embedded in its skin. Edible, it can easily break out of fishing nets and so much be caught using a strong line. The scales are often used in jewelry in Seaholds.

**Burdenbeast** - an ox (NOT burden beast)

**Buzz Fly** - a stinging fly native to Pern.

**Canine** - also, dog. Canines have been carefully bred to fulfill a number of needs, from utility (herding, hunting, guarding holds against wherries and snakes, kitchen labor), recreation (racing, fighting), and sometimes even as extra protein for the stew pot. Even lap varieties have been bred to serve as ladies' pets.

**Cark** - a dangerous, aggressive native fish common to southern seas.

**Crawler** - biting six-legged pests native to Pern; web builders.

**Crawlie** - A native lizardlike creature similar to the Terran gecko; they have six legs with bulbous toes adapted for sticking to sheer walls and ceilings, and limited color-changing ability. They mainly eat insects, capturing them with sticky tongues. They live almost exclusively in tropical areas and can become pests if they grow too numerous, though generally they are kept in check by various breeds of tunnelsnakes and other predators.

**Darters** - Small wherries that feed on insects and crawlers, darters of one form or another are familiar to just about everyone on Pern as they are extremely common, often brightly colored animals that often live close to human settlements. Their numbers have been somewhat dented in recent Turns by the spread of firelizards, which consider darters to be the right size for hunting; they are also taken by cats and tunnelsnakes. Some species are valued for their intricate songs and are kept as cage pets.

**Dimglows** - large aquatic air-breathing herbivores, dimglows are named for their somewhat limited intellectual capacity. Marine species are found around the oceanic coasts and the Southern inland sea, feeding on sea plants; freshwater species inhabit deeper rivers and lakes. Secretive animals, dimglows never leave the water and are valued for their meat and oil, for which they are hunted. They are fairly squat in appearance with low dorsal ridges, six limbs (the front pair adapted for pulling foliage towards the mouth, the two rear pairs as flippers) and a horizontally flattened, fluked tail.

**Divers** - these are slender fish-eating wherries not dissimilar to the Terran cormorant. Sociable, if noisy animals, they may be tamed if caught young and in some areas they are trained to fish for their owners, being fitted with loose collars that prevent them from swallowing larger fish. Fairly intelligent, they have long toothed bills, dense feathers and - in the case of the domesticated examples -- an air of almost palpable arrogance.

**Earthworm** - self explanatory. Native to Pern

**Eels** - like their Terran counterparts, Pernese eels are long, sinuous fish that are highly regarded as food animals. They are found in both fresh and salt water and some species can grow to great size.

**Feline** - also, cat. Commonly kept to hunt local vermin.

**Fingerling** - small minnow-like fish native to Pern.

**Firefly** - small, pretty native insects, similar to the Terran variety.

**Firelizard** - Firelizards are one of the best known of Pernese species. Attaching themselves to human companions and providing the genetic material from which the dragons were developed, firelizards are smooth-skinned carnivorous creatures that have beaks only in the hatchling form, where they are used to break out of the egg. In the wild, the two natural species are found only in the tropics, although the larger, engineered varieties can live in all regions.



The original Pernese "dragons", firelizards are a tropical species with a highly organized social structure based around different castes defined by genetically determined colors. Each group, or fair, of 'lizards is led by a golden-yellow queen who defends a hunting, breeding territory, permitting no other adult queen to trespass. Of the other colors, the small and numerous greens are female, while the blues, browns and bronzes are male. The males, especially the browns and bronzes, stay close to the queen and vie for her favor, while the greens spread throughout the territory -- their small, undefended nests often mark the edge of a fair's territory. Both golds and greens are fertile, but the greens have little maternal instinct and their eggs are thus more vulnerable to predators than those of the golds; those that do hatch, however, produce hatchlings as fit and healthy as any queen's.

When a queen's clutch hatches, the fair collects small prey items and feeds the emerging hatchlings, imprinting and binding them to the fair as they do so. Young firelizards reach maturity at two Turns of age; greens, blues and browns remain with the parental fair, but young bronzes of this age leave to settle with other fairs (spreading genetic diversity) and young queens are driven out by their dams, who won't tolerate rivals for their males and their territory. A young gold may challenge her dam for her territory, but more usually leaves to seek her own. There is a high casualty rate amongst eggs, even those of a queen, and amongst young and inexperienced 'lizards -- especially those who leave to seek new fairs and territories.

One of the most notable things about firelizards -- and the thing that made them suitable for creating the dragons from -- is their mental abilities. A fair is held together by empathic and telepathic ties that are established at birth, and the hatchling 'lizards will bond to humans as readily as to others of their own species. So far as can be established, firelizards regard a human companion (and any other 'lizards that human may have) as their "fair"; queens regard their human as representing their "territory", albeit one with few

good clutching sites -- those humans who own more than one gold 'lizard may find themselves with problems! Firelizards can also teleport from danger, a tremendous advantage for a small animal. Another defense mechanism is the ability to metabolize firestone to produce a flaming gas - the "second stomach" used to break down the stone is actually a development of the wherry crop.

All 'lizard castes can flame; the inhibitions that prevent queen dragons from flaming (and those that prevent green dragons from breeding) were engineered into them when the dragons were first created

**Fishersnakes** - large tunnelsnakes with short, dense fur, fishersnakes inhabit the edges of rivers, streams and lakes. Not especially well equipped as swimmers, the 'snakes have elongated forelimbs with huge claws and also have excellent eyesight; they choose fishing points beside their chosen body of water and stand perfectly still, waiting for a fish to pass by. Once the prey has been spotted, the forelimbs are used to quickly grab the fish from the water to be dispatched by the 'snake's teeth before being consumed.

**Flatfish** - fish that, as the name suggests, have a flat body form. Usually found hugging the sea floor, Pernese flatfish resemble Terran rays more than plaice or sole -- there are many species, the majority of which are important food fish.

**Flameflies** - nocturnal fireflies found in the tropical and semi-tropical latitudes of both Northern and Southern continents.

**Fliptails** - small, hard-skinned animals related to the bellclaws and spiderclaws, fliptails have a curved body that they spring straight in order to rapidly escape predators. Found in both fresh and salt water, they are an important food source for many creatures and can be eaten by humans once cooked and shelled. They are often found in huge numbers and may be caught using fine nets.

**Gossamer Spinner** - spiders

**Grabbers** - an unusual group of fish, grabbers are one of the most important groups of marine carnivore. All have powerful, vertically flattened tails and two pairs of fins, one at the midpoint of the body, the other towards the rear. There are also a pair of front limbs adapted into grabbing claws not dissimilar to those of a tunnelsnake -- when not in use, these tuck into a streamlined pouch below and behind the formidably toothed mouth. When hunting, a grabber uses the claws to seize the prey, which may be a whole fish, or a chunk of an unwary larger creature. Some oceanic species can grow to huge size, those of the coastal regions are generally smaller but can be dangerous to humans as they lurk amongst the rocks, waiting for prey to pass by.

**Greystalks** - shelled marine animals that attach themselves to rocks by a long, fleshy stalk, leaving the rest of the body

to catch small particles from the water. They are edible, if not entirely pleasant looking.

**Grubs** - grubs are a bio-engineered lifeform created by early colonists to protect the land from Thread predation. They are unintelligent, sickly grey, limbless creatures which resemble large maggots. During Intervals, grubs survive on parasites which feed off of plant life, turning the soil as they feed, providing an excellent organic stimulation for growth so that grubbed soils result in healthier crop yields. On Kadanzer's Pern, grubs are almost mythical. Centuries ago, an unknown virus swept through the grub population and nearly wiped them out. Only very few survived, and they are not as reproductively successful as they once were. They are almost never found in the wild.

**Herdbeast** - also, cattle; polled and non-polled strains both exist. They have been bred into varieties to provide an excess of milk as well as meat and hide.

**Ice Wherries** - this is a name given to a wide range of flightless fishing wherries that live in the colder regions of Pern. The wings of ice wherries are adapted as strong paddles that propel the animal through the water as it hunts, seizing fish with its beak and strong foreclaws. A good, if fatty, source of meat, ice wherries are hunted by longnecks and seawhers.

**Lizardhawks** - bearing some resemblance to Terran hawks, lizardhawks are a group of species spread across Pern; the tropical examples sometimes take firelizards in the wild, hence the name, although tunnelsnakes and other wherries are the more usual prey. Reasonably intelligent carnivores, they may be domesticated and trained if caught young and are sometimes used to hunt other wherries.

**Longnecks** - these are air-breathing carnivores, feeding on fish, spiderclaws and watercrawlers. A small, often beaked, head is balanced at the end of a long, sinuous neck connected to a thick, streamlined body; there is one pair of flippers, a heavy, vertically flattened tail used for propulsion, and a prominent dorsal ridge that is often fairly ornate in some marine species. Found in all of Pern's major seas and oceans, marine longnecks are egg-layers, the females seeking out traditional beaches to lay their two eggs and raise their young to the point where they can swim and feed independently. There are also several species of longneck found in freshwater rivers and lakes, these tend to be much smaller and shorter-necked than their marine relatives and are almost all capable of giving live birth.

**Lopers** - these are the largest of wherries, flightless herbivores with small, almost vestigial wings that are used by the males in mating displays. Reaching up to twice the height of a man and named for the steady gait that allows them to cover huge distances, lopers have a very wide distribution and can eat almost any kind of plant matter. An

important meat animal with an impressive breeding rate, lopers may be farmed; indeed, one of the smaller species is the familiar ostrich-sized "farm wherry". Color and density of plumage differ between species and even within species across their geographical range.

**Orangegills** - small, numerous fish that live in huge schools, feeding on smaller animals such as fliptails. Caught in nets, they are a valued food source in coastal holds; they are also frequently used as bait for larger fish.

**Packtail** - squat, bottom-dwelling sea fish with a thick fleshy tail and poisonous spines along its back. A valued food fish, although care must be taken in handling it.

**Paddlers** - these are a group of flightless tropical species similar in body form and lifestyle to the icewherries of colder regions, although the two groups are not closely related. The plumage of paddlers is much sparser than the fine, dense coat of the cold-water animals.

**Redbellies** - large, meaty river fish that breed in the shallows of lakes, often migrating hundreds of miles to do so. Adults sometimes venture into salt water to feed, but always return to fresh in order to lay their eggs. An important food fish, especially during the breeding season when they are easily caught. They prefer colder waters.

**Rockmite** - a native crustacean similar to Terran crabs. Good eating and very common, with fresh and saltwater subspecies available.

**Rocksnares** - a generic term applied to a large number of species spread all across Pern, rocksnares are generally slender, agile animals that live amongst the rocks and in caves -- these are the 'snakes that most often plague human settlements. They will eat almost anything they come across and can cause massive spoilage to stored food. Some are poisonous and will bite if disturbed.

**Roller** - the Pernese equivalent of the wood louse. Pests.

**Runnerbeast** - also, horse or runner. Draft, riding, racing, and pony types have all been bred. On our version of Pern, 'Horse' is just as common a term as 'runnerbeast', and both are used interchangeably.

**Sandrocks** - clam-like animals that live under the sand of beaches, from where they may be dug up at low tide.

**Sandworm** - self explanatory. Native desert-dwelling pests.

**Seapickles** - elongated creatures covered in sharp spines to protect their soft bodies, seapickles browse the sea floor in tropical regions. They are edible, although human divers must take care in collecting them.

**Seawhers** - air-breathing predators, seawhers are probably the most intelligent of the native inhabitants of Pern's ocean. Although some species are smaller than dolphins, these tend to be shy and are rarely seen by humans. The larger species are better known and are Pern's equivalent to the Terran orca -- if somewhat less friendly. Those of the oceans travel in large pods, hunting bigmouths and dimglows, although they have been known to "finish off" boats and ships damaged in storms and will willingly eat any human or dolphins foolish or unlucky enough to get too close. However, they will not approach undamaged vessels, preferring to keep their distance. Seawhers can be highly protective of other pod members; hunting seawhers from dragons is not an option as a dragon in the water would be seen as fair game...Seawhers are streamlined creatures with a powerful vertically flattened tail that is used for propulsion. The rear limbs are reduced to solid stabilizers; the middle limbs are adapted as large steering fins while the front limbs are much reduced to small flaps in front of the main fins, and are used only in mating. A series of dorsal ridges run along the back, with one elongated to a triangular fin at the midpoint. Female seawhers give birth to live young, usually two at a time, and the whole pod is involved in raising the young.

**Seasnakes** - the creatures most commonly referred to as "seasnakes" are actually very large predatory eels that sometimes hunt in packs in deep water. The name is also sometimes applied to certain species of tunnelsnakes that hunt in water -- some of these are highly poisonous and should be avoided.

**Shipfish** - also, dolphin. The people of our Pern, have only recently become aware of the dolphin's intelligence. (Some people still do not believe in it.) Dolphins, together with those of the Dolphineer raft, play a key role on Pern's seas. Usually beloved by Pernese, and are never fished. Note that "Shipfish" is considered insulting by the dolphins themselves, though it is still in wide use by those who are not in close contact with them.

**Skimmers** - large, flat sea fish that feed on small floating creatures by skimming them out of the water. Similar to the Terran manta ray.

**Slashers** - Southern carnivores, most species of slasher are flightless, although some of the smaller types still retain the use of their wings. Ranging in size from creatures the size of a chicken to those as tall as a human, slashers have an impressive set of slicing teeth -- the beak is either much reduced or completely absent - but their main weapons are



their claws. Both the fore and hindlimbs are equipped with sharp, strong claws that are used in bringing down prey; the usual hunting method involves the prey being seized by the foreclaws before being disemboweled by the powerful hindlimbs. Many slashers are pack hunters and are considered dangerous, taking farm animals as readily as those in the wild -- they would probably attack a human if given the opportunity. Fortunately, they are wary of dragons.

**Snowsweepers** - large squat animals completely covered in dense, dark grey fur, snowsweepers are herbivores that feed in the tundra regions of the South. They are named for the manner in which a family group of five or six animals will form a line and move slowly forward over the ground, browsing continuously as they go. They are usually accompanied by hairpeckers, small wherries that pluck parasites from the 'sweepers fur and which act as lookouts, warning their hosts of the approach of predators such as icewhens, slashers and wild dogs. If predators do attack, the snowsweepers form into a tight huddle and defend themselves with their broad, hardened beaks and their forelimbs, which are adapted into curved and cutting blades.

**Spiderclaw** - enclosed in a hardened carapace, spiderclaws lives on the sea floor, hunting and scavenging for food. Most have small bodies with long legs tipped with small claws, but some are more elongated, almost resembling oversized fliptails. An important food animal.

**Springers** - short-bodied herbivores with stiff tails held above the ground, springers have large hind legs which give them a characteristic bounding gait. Ranging in size from mouse- to sheep-sized, they are found throughout the warmer regions of the Southern Continent, where they feed on ground plants and nest in burrows beneath the ground, often in family groups. Springers are edible and are often taken from the wild as food animals; firelizards often feed on the smaller species that humans regard as pests of crops.

**Sprinter** - somewhat smaller than the lopers to which they are closely related, sprinters are slender flightless wherries that can be as tall as a man in the larger species. Omnivores with toothed beaks, they are nervy animals continually on the lookout for danger, fleeing at high speed should they feel

threatened -- they are one of the few creatures than can outrun a wildcat.

**Stabbers** - slender, long-necked wherries with long beaks, stabbers frequent the edges of rivers and lakes, feeding on small fish and watercrawlers that they pluck from the shallows.

**Thread** - Thread is a non-sentient extraterrestrial spore which originates from the cometary tail of the Red Star. On flesh it leaves phosphorus burn-like wounds when the consumption can be stopped in time -- but warning, Thread works fast! Only dragonfire, water, freezing cold, and agenothree will kill Thread; a quick skip between will freeze it to char. Only metal and rock is impervious to it. Once in contact with the ground, Thread will begin to burrow and feed, consuming all organic matter it touches and leaving behind a shell which deteriorates rapidly. Thread burrows at an explosive rate as the spores feed, and are difficult to eradicate once a burrow has established itself. Although a Threadfall is often described as a "silver rain" in the sky, it actually falls in irregular clumps rather than in rain-like sheets.

**Treehoppers** - these are furred, arboreal 'snakes with long, heavily furred tails -- they strongly resemble six-legged squirrels. Found wherever there are trees for them to feed from and live in, treehoppers are widely considered to be vermin, causing damage to orchards and eating their way through nut and berry crops. They are a favorite prey of domestic firelizards and cats, and are often found in stews, but despite this they breed so rapidly that their numbers never seem to reduce. Treehoppers can grow to the length of a man's arm and range in color from pale grey-brown through russet to near-black. In temperate regions they hibernate during the winter months.



**Trundlebug** - a native insect which does the pollinating work done on Earth by dung-beetles, bees, earthworms, and ladybugs (all of which died out on Pern).

**Tunnel Snake** - Tunnelsnakes are almost the generic Pernese animal, showing the warm-blooded, six-limbed body plan from which all the "higher" creatures have developed. Some are scaled, others have smooth hide or are furred. They can differ wildly in diet and lifestyle -- herbivores, omnivores, carnivores, scavengers, all are

represented -- although all are egg-layers. Most are pests, although some are edible.



**Vtol** - another native insect, one which can leap into flight from a vertical position.

**Yellowfins** - large, powerful deep sea fish, yellowfish travel in schools, feeding on smaller fish. Their meat is of a very high quality and much valued, although catching them takes skill as they can rip through most nets. In some places, schools passing close to shore are herded into inlets and butchered there.

**Watch-Wher** - one of the self-perpetuating "mistakes" produced by the settlers' attempts to produce dragons, watchwhers are the familiar guard animals of the Northern Continent, where they are also used by the Minecraft below ground. Reasonably intelligent and with some minor telepathic abilities and a strong sense of loyalty to their human friends, watchwhers are low-slung ugly creatures with malformed eyes that cause them to be photophobic; they also have a strong, unpleasant odor. They show the same range of colors as the firelizards and dragons, although, as in the dragons, only the golds may breed, the greens having been engineered to be sterile. Golds are mostly kept by the Minecraft, who breed them for work in the mines, and young males are often sold to Holds who want them as guard beasts; greens are often culled at hatching as their unpredictable mating heats make them unsuitable as work or guard beasts, although the Minecraft tends to keep some to provide sexual relief for the males that work in the mines. All the "wild whers" on the Northern Continent are feral watchwhers -- although rare, it is not unknown for golds to escape and breed in the wild. These wild examples are solitary animals but can cause considerable damage to livestock and will attack humans if disturbed. The Southern Continent, on the other hand, has its own species of wild wher that is distinct from the watchwher; see below.

**Watersnakes** - a name applied to any number of tunnelsnakes that feed in rivers and streams. Most are harmless but some are poisonous and should be treated with care.

**Waterwherries** - the Pernese equivalent of ducks and geese, waterwherries of various species are common sights on rivers and lakes. They are sometimes kept in captivity for their eggs and meat; the feathers are also used to stuff upholstery and pillows.

**Wherry** - Wherries are Pern's native birds, with the middle set of limbs adapted into membranous wings. Most have a covering of "featherfur" (insulating but not too similar to the feathers of Terran birds) covering their bodies, including the wings. The powerful hind limbs are adapted for springing or running, while the forelimbs are used for grasping. Most wherries have beaks of some variety, but some also have grasping teeth -- they do not have chewing teeth as they have a crop containing grinding stones.



Wherries come in all shapes and sizes and there are many thousands of different species inhabiting many ecological niches. Many have lost the ability to fly and are instead powerful

runners; several of these species have been domesticated and are farmed extensively on both the Northern and Southern Continents for their meat, eggs and hides ("wherhide" is actually the tanned skin of large running wherries). Others are taken from the wild as food animals for both humans and, in the case of the larger animals, dragons.

Not all wherries are herbivorous however. Carnivores include those that feed on fish (such as divers) or small animals and wherries (such as lizardhawks). Larger carnivores capable of killing animals such as herdbeasts do exist though, generally in the more untamed regions of the South.



**Whers** - another of the hiccups in the dragon breeding program, whers are a totally wild species found only on the Southern Continent, where they were left after the Second Crossing. Like watchwhers, they show the full range of dragon colors, and once again the greens are sterile and cannot reproduce. However, whers are "better designed" than their domestic cousins -- although mainly nocturnal they are not photophobic, they have legs long and powerful enough to carry their heavy bodies clear of the ground, and they have little discernable scent.

Whers have a wide range across the entirety of the Southern Continent and show a complex social structure. Golds control large territories in which they construct breeding dens; a single gold territory typically contains five or six smaller territories controlled by males who fight to maintain their borders and to attract the gold to their patch when she is ready to mate - a result of this is that the small blues are very rare as the larger bronzes and browns quickly kill them in territorial fights. Greens do not hold territories and wander freely through those of the males; as greens are small and agile they can generally avoid detection unless

they are in mating heat, in which case the males welcome them. A mated gold lays 7-10 eggs in an underground den, keeping them warm by piling rotting vegetation around them; after hatching she feeds the young for a month before abandoning them to find their own territories. Gold whers can be fairly large (similar in size to a Terran lioness), while bronzes and browns are maybe two-thirds that size. Greens and blues are about half the size of a gold or smaller, but adult blues are extremely rare. One aspect of the small size of the greens is that they can use their wings to glide small distances -- in all other colors, the wings are functionally useless.

Whers are active hunters but will readily take penned domestic stock if given the opportunity; as a result they are unpopular with the Southern settlers who must nonetheless treat them with considerable respect as whers consider humans a prey animal as much as any wherry.

**Whersport** - the closest natural relatives to the firelizards, whersports are a much less notable species with little in the way of mental abilities. They have only two colour phases -- brown in the male and green in the female, with the smooth hide having a far more mottled appearance than the firelizards -- and are larger than their cousins, with the large males reaching the length of a man's arm. Usually shy animals, they live in tropical forests where mated pairs defend hunting territories -- they take small wherries and other animals, but the bulk of their diet is made up of the eggs of other species and, especially, crawlers. Whersports have heavily clawed forelimbs that they use to rip open the rock-like nests of certain tropical crawlers, collecting the inhabitants with their long sticky tongues. Their wings are functional but they rarely use them except in emergency -- they are poor fliers and vulnerable to aerial predators, rarely leaving cover if they can help it. They are edible and their flesh is considered a delicacy by humans, reflecting the fact that they are not easy to find and catch.

**Whitewings** - seawherries that inhabit coastal areas, nesting in cliffs and feeding on fish. A common sight around most coasts, there are actually several species of whitewing, all very similar though they can be told apart by their differing sizes and details of their plumage.

**Wildcat** - wildcats are a genetically engineered predatory feline which were created with the intentions of developing an intelligent, Impressionable guard/hunt companion. Unfortunately, the scientist doing the experimentation wasn't a qualified geneticist, and his prototypes killed him before escaping into the wilds of the Southern Continent. Wildcats, as they have been named by the most recent settlers of Southern, are about 3.5 feet tall at the shoulder and about 5 feet long, with the conformation of a jaguar/cheetah hybrid. Its coat is a rich, tawny yellow, spotted with black rosettes. The body is massive and powerfully muscled, with a relatively small head and long legs built for explosive sprinting power. Over short distances, the wildcat can attain

speeds of up to 45 mph; it is also an adept climber and excellent swimmer, making it capable of taking a range of aquatic, arboreal, and terrestrial prey. Wildcats are aggressive, territorial, and highly intelligent. Pairs will mate for life; unmated individuals will remain solitary. In the tropical areas of Southern Continent, they appear to mate in any season, although elsewhere they mate during the spring. After a gestation period of eight months, the female of a mated pair will bear one to two cubs, who take an estimated three years to gain full maturity. The lifespan of a wildcat is estimated to be approximately 30 years; territorial disputes between wildcats often result in death. Wildcats can be tamed if captured as kittens. If taken into human care early enough, wildcats will imprint upon humans, making them reliable and highly intelligent hunting companions/guardians. However, if taken after the kittens have imprinted on their natural kin, wildcats will be very difficult to train and highly likely to turn on their trainers -- which is nearly always fatal for the trainer. In the wild, wildcats usually avoid humans and human habitations, but they will hunt and kill lone humans who stray into their territory or prey upon domestic livestock. Therefore, humans often hunt or drive away wildcats whenever the two species encounter one another.

**Woolbearer** - also, sheep or woollies. Several subspecies have been bred, but none are highly regarded for anything resembling intelligence.

**Yellowstripe** - a small, native fish with yellow racing stripes.

**Yellowfins** - a medium-sized native fish with bright yellow fins.

**Yellowtail** - a small, native fish with a yellow tail and dorsal stripe.