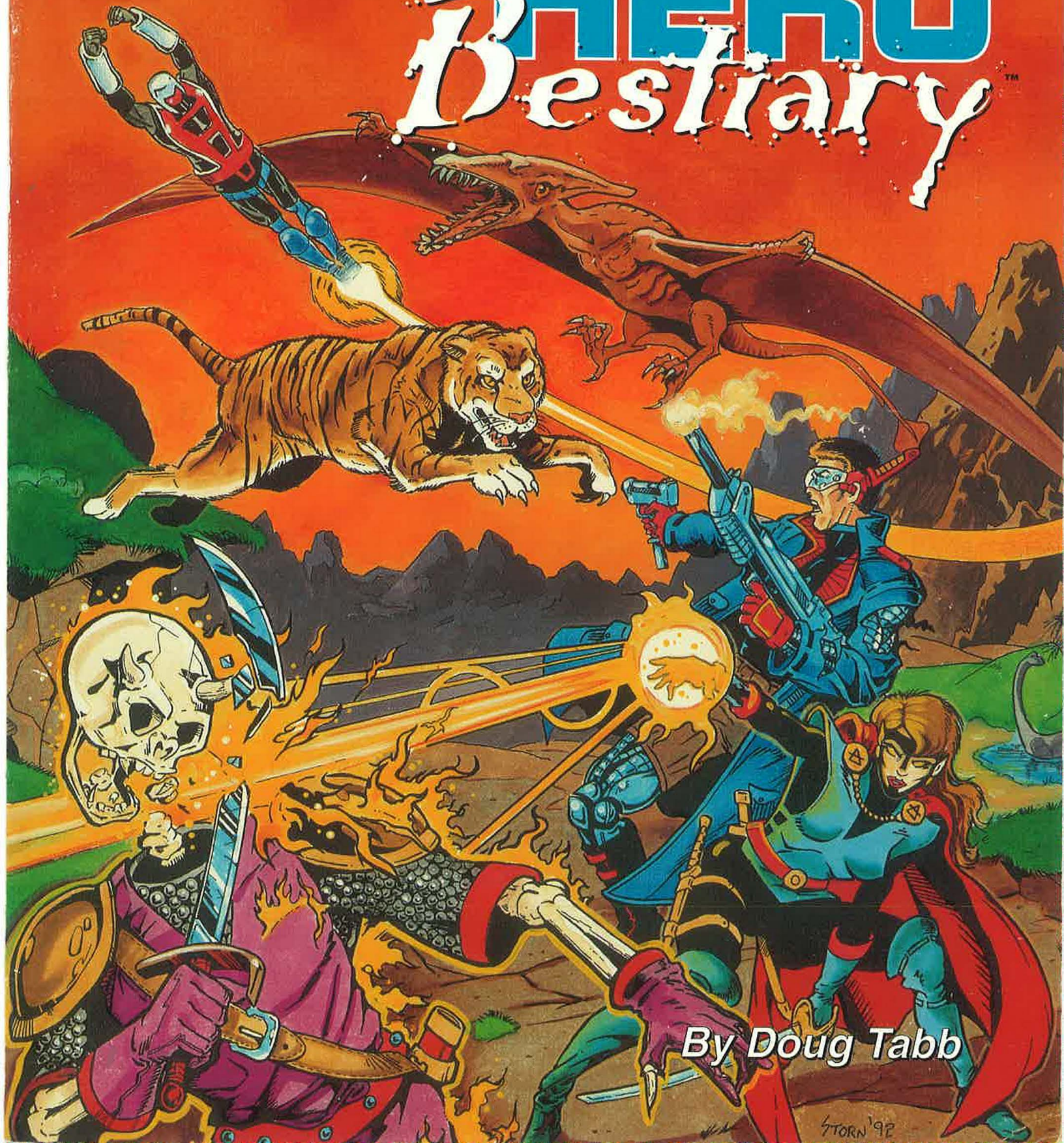


HERO Bestiary



By Doug Tabb

STORN '92

HERO Bestiary™

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INTRODUCTION

The *Hero Bestiary* is the most extensive listing of animals and other creatures for use with *Champions*, *Fantasy Hero*, and other *Hero System* games ever released. It contains lions for taming, sharks for hunting, dinosaurs for discovering, and demons for exercising. If you play any *Hero System* game we guarantee there's something in the *Hero Bestiary* for you!

WHAT'S INSIDE?

... As many creatures and as much information as could possibly be rationalized! The first portion of the *Bestiary* contains further information and clarification of the *Hero System* rules as they apply to animal and monsters and their uses in the *Hero* universe. Animal Handler Skill and animal Followers are handled extensively. Every effort has been made *not* to rewrite the *Hero* rules or make up new "optional" rules to accommodate the creatures here. The rest of the *Bestiary* gives complete stats for nearly 200 animals, monsters and other beasts. Lastly we have a listing of terrains and climates and what creatures can be found there.

For those of you who have bought *Fantasy Hero* or the *Fantasy Hero Companion*, some of these creatures may look familiar. Yes, some of the creatures which appear there have been included in this book. They have been printed here for the sake of those people who play *Champions* or other genre games and might not have bought the *Fantasy Hero* books, and chosen from that book because they are creatures which often occur in genres other than fantasy (such as vampires). Fear not that you have wasted your money, as most of those creatures which have previously appeared have been refined and re-figured for this *Bestiary*.

ANIMALS GENRE BY GENRE

Each genre in the *Hero System* provides its own special opportunities and problems in the use of creatures. The kinds of animals encountered, the circumstances under which they are encountered, the level of reality in the playing of NPC animals—all will vary with the particular game.

CHAMPIONS

The comic book genre provides perhaps the widest range of animal encounter options to the GM. Of course, most ordinary animals do not pose much of a threat to the average superhero if used in an obvious manner.

A superhero earth abounds in unexplored wildernesses, lost valleys and subterranean worlds. Naturally, some are inhabited by creatures either long gone from the familiar world or completely unknown to it in the first place. The star systems of a comic book universe teem with life, and are readily accessible via the character's powers or ships, or easily made so by a *deus ex machina* (such as being kidnapped by aliens). The barriers of time and interdimensional space are broken with humdrum regularity by heroes, villains, and simple comic book coincidence.

Explorers can bring living souvenirs home with them; brilliant but erratic scientists can produce odd specimens in their laboratories. And any self-respecting supervillain is capable of importing or creating exotic menaces to bedevil his old enemies.

In short, there are numerous opportunities in the course of a superhero campaign to introduce animal encounters. More examples:

Earthquakes can free living fossils or underground horrors; meteorites can disgorge utterly bizarre creatures or emit radiation that mutates ordinary animals into extraordinary, eye-catching menaces. (Bringing such creatures to the characters has the advantage, from the point of view of making an exciting adventure, that there is more for them to destroy in the thick of civilization; the necessity for subduing them is more urgent.)

A good GM can also generate respectable emergencies with ordinary, real-life animals. A cattle stampede, or an ecological upheaval that sends an entire animal community berserk, may be a challenge to even the toughest hero, who might find being confronted with a multitude of little emergencies—all happening at once—a real test of his mettle.

In spite of the bash-and-smash tradition of comics, it will often be advisable for the heroes to think before lashing out at animals—or even intimidating them. For one thing, a flashy and undisciplined use of force on or near animals can make a bad situation even worse: animals are not cowed into surrender, they are frightened into fleeing or fighting. Additionally, wounding an animal which subsequently escapes, mad with pain, is not a good thing. A blooded tiger on the prowl is not hard for a superhero to catch—but first he must find it, before it kills, or kills again.

Another fact to consider is that the superhero is usually bound by one of the most exacting codes of ethics and sportsmanship found in any genre. Except for the mightiest monsters, animals just are not in league with most superheroes; and it is even rarer to find a creature with the intelligence to act out of real malice. For a superhero to duke it out with a creature that means no harm, and that can't take that kind of punishment, is just not according to the tradition of fair play. It can lead to a loss of prestige for the hero if there are normal observers about.

Of course, a hero can get away with punching out an enraged dinosaur in the middle of Main Street, or with energy blasting the swarm of mutant ants headed straight for the city limits. But even in such situations, a little caution is in order. If the dinosaur is hurt, but not stopped ... if the energy blast sets the warehouse on fire ...

FANTASY HERO

Use of animals in a fantasy adventure has advantages and disadvantages quite different from their use in other games. One advantage is that you may more frequently use mythological creatures and monsters in fantasy. Another is that you make animals behave in a totally fantastic manner.

Often, fantastic creatures tend not to panic. Aggressive ones may be too single-minded to think of fear. Non-aggressive creatures might have the cunning of human-level intelligence.

The GM who doesn't want to make things too tough on his players may question the wisdom of making mythological beasts too smart; but there are several reasons to make them act with apparent reason and purpose. Mythical animals are almost invariably more amazing than real ones. Intelligence makes sense in specific situations: most dragons are dumb brutes, but one guarding a huge treasure will almost inevitably be an exception. Consider how long a time he's lived to gather such a pile, how good he must be in defending it, and much like a human he must think to have collected it in the first place.

One of the few fantasy traditions that role-playing games have not picked up to any great extent is the NPC animal-person (the Jiminy Cricket or Archimedes the Owl school of fantasy). Such extraordinary creatures do not usually have physical characteristics different from those of the normal animals that they resemble; but they will have human-level intelligence and, often, the ability to speak. The function of such creatures is usually to give help or advice to characters who have failed or who have no idea of what to do next. Often, these animals appear to have mental powers of one sort or another; they are virtually infallible, or at least will consistently remind the player characters that they are. These animals might actually *be* humans, under some sort of spell.

Animals will play a great part in the daily lives of the characters of fantasy. This is a low-technology setting. The faithful steed is the only real alternative to walking. Only animals have the strength to carry burdens and perform tasks that are beyond human strength.

The standard animal follower to the character in this genre will be the destrier—the faithful steed. The “basic horse” is not a warhorse—not trained to fight in cooperation with its rider, and it might panic in combat. Such an untrained animal might well toss his rider for a pratfall and take off for parts unknown the moment the dragon rears its ugly head. If a character buys a horse follower, he will do well to buy the training needed to minimize such possibilities.

Fantasy provides for all sorts of animal followers, and so wolves, birds of prey, dragons the size of domestic cats, homunculi, wizardly familiars, and so forth may all be animal followers, as the GM allows.

WESTERN HERO

This genre uses animals much like fantasy, except there are no mythological or magical beasts—unless it is quite the unconventional Western! As above, the cowboy's best friend is his horse, and well-trained animals are a common facet of the genre.

Animals are often foes in the Western. Rattlesnakes, bears, scorpions, mountain lions and other dangerous “critters” threaten the lives of Western heroes every day. Even normally non-hostile animals, such as cattle, can be a threat if stampeded.

CYBER HERO

This genre rarely uses animals, and is mentioned only for completeness. Many animals are extinct in the dark future, and usually exist mainly in zoos or as pets. Certain exotic, ferocious animals, like tigers, snakes, or sharks can make interesting pets for villains—and maybe they are equipped with cybernetic enhancements, making them unique creatures, to say the least.

THE BESTIARY

For ease of separation, the Hero Bestiary is separated into the following parts:

- **Fantasy & Mythical Creatures**
- **Prehistoric Creatures**
- **Animals**
- **Movie Monsters**

GAME STATISTICS

Each beast is listed with its game statistics followed by information on the beast. This information is broken down into these categories:

Appearance: What the creature looks like.

Ecology: This category includes such things as what the creature's habitat is, what it eats, what its abilities are, and how many are usually encountered at a time.

Motivations: How the creature thinks and why it acts the way it does. If it is intelligent, what it likes or hates and how it views its own existence. For creatures with simple animal instincts such as the drive to survive and multiply, the Motivations category will simply read “normal animal motivations”.

Combat Techniques: Describes the creature's combat abilities and how it will fight in most situations.

Other Names: For animals this might include other historically inaccurate or slang names of the animal, such as River Horse or Behemoth, in reference to Hippopotamus. For monsters and mythical creatures it could list regional names for the same creature such as Ghost Light or Elf Fire in reference to Will-o-wisps. Common misapplied names are also listed.

Rumors: This category lists historic or mythical references to common animals and mythical beasts. Many other fictitious rumors are also included. These, of course, are only rumors. They may be treated as factual or not depending on the GM. It is hoped that this category will spark the imagination of GMs in creating new adventures for their players.

HERO Bestiary™

Dragons. Aliens. Faeries.
Ghosts. Lions. Tigers. Bears...
(you get the picture). Every
creature, every genre—the **Hero
System™** strikes again! Usable
with any **Hero** game, the **Hero
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creatures are presented here to
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- Dozens of dinosaurs and other prehistoric beasts
- A myriad of movie monsters
- A statistics summary table that includes full combat statistics for all of the creatures with full descriptions—and for dozens of other animals and monsters
- GM guidelines for using and creating beasts—as well as the poisons and diseases that they might carry

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