INTRODUCTION

My creative efforts are geared toward an audience that appreciates an older style of loose — and quirky — rules and game play. *Mutant Future* has, for a growing audience, just the sort of fresh quirkiness people need to turn to when their other gaming interests are getting stale. Where else can you battle spidergoats while one of your heads is arguing with the other about how to best roast a spidergoat haunch?

That's not to say *Mutant Future* can't be serious business. Like any role-playing game, the "feel" will largely be developed by what the players bring to the table. If you want a dark, gritty post-apocalyptic game, *Mutant Future* can give you that. If you want a more gonzo, lighthearted romp, we have that covered, too. And because the rules are fully compatible with similar fantasy games, simulacrum wizards could fight right alongside Father Fiestro, the mutant dog cleric.

Now we have *Creatures of the Wastelands: Mutational Evolution*. This book contributes to the growing family of *Mutant Future* products by discussing and providing guidelines for creating entire families of mutant creatures. It is a guide to adaptive radiation in the mutant future, for those of you out there who speak biologese.

Use this book to add more depth to your post-apocalyptic world, and to create ever more startlingly vibrant science-fantasy!

Daniel Proctor
Goblinoid Games

INTRODUCTION

This installment of *Creatures of the Wastelands* supplements to the Mutant Future post-apocalyptic role-playing game looks both at how whole families of creatures can be created and how mutations might affect campaign setting construction. First are three essays that discuss the family concept, the herd concept, and accelerated evolution. Then there are four sample families, House Sparrows, Stinging Nettles, Feather Shrubs, and Yellowjackets; the first three have 20 species each and the yellowjackets have 40, and each has different ways of using the family concept. And finally there are the mutations from *Creatures of the Wastelands* used in creating the families, which are reprinted here for your convenience.

In *Mutant Future*, the term "monster" can refer to any being other than the player characters. Monsters are listed in this section in an encyclopedic format. Each monster has certain characteristics, which are defined below. Although each monster listing can be considered to represent the "average" specimen of a particular creature, the Mutant Lord can alter the abilities and power level of any creature to fit the situation.

Number Encountered: This variable number represents the typical number of this type of monster that will appear together at one time. For example, if a 4 HD creature has a Number Encountered listing of 1d8, then when this creature is encountered, 1d8 of the creatures will be present. The Mutant Lord should alter the Number Encountered as necessary to adjust the difficulty level. In general, the number should be reduced if the creature is encountered by weaker characters, and increased if encountered by more powerful characters. A number range in parenthesis represents the number of monsters of a type that typically inhabits their "nest" or lair, or the number that will be encountered in a wilderness setting.

Alignment: All monsters will be chaotic, neutral, or lawful. Many monsters are either unintelligent or are simply unconcerned about law and chaos, and are considered neutral.

Movement: There are two listings under this category. The first represents a number in feet per turn that a creature may move. The second value provided in parentheses represents the monster's encounter movement, which are in feet per round. If two different rates are given, the additional movement will relate to movement of a different kind, which will be appropriate to the creature. A couple of possibilities include flying or swimming.

Armor Class: In game terms, the AC of a monster means the same thing as a character's AC. For monsters, this value reflects not only the creature's general agility but also its natural armor, from tough hide or a mutational adjustment.

Hit Dice: This value is roughly equivalent to character level, but for monsters it always represents a number of hit points determined by this number of d8s. For example, a 2 HD monster will have 2d8 hit points. Sometimes a value is given as a "+" or "-", in which case this number is added or subtracted from the hit points rolled. A monster will have a minimum of 1 hp. Hit dice further reflect the attack ability of monsters. The hit dice number will be located on the Monster Attack table, and the number needed to hit different armor classes will be used for an encounter. Further, the number of hit dice a monster has is related to how many experience points the characters receive when the monster is killed. Refer to the Monster Experience Points table in Section 4.

Attacks: This listing describes how many attacks are available to a monster, per round, and the nature of the attacks. These will be listed in the same order as the appropriate damage in the damage listing.

Damage: Damage is listed in the same order as attacks, and is represented by a number and the kind of die that should

ESSAYS

THE FAMILY TREE CONCEPT

The family tree concept describes how anywhere from several to many creatures can be developed through the mutation rules found in *Mutant Future* and similar games. For those people who have never read or seen a family tree, the charts at the end of the book might be helpful in visualizing the concept, as well as providing context to the four examples we have provided. These rules assume that a creature can mutate in a matter of hours to days and gain one or more amazing abilities or powers. In all cases, the charts of mutations and drawbacks to be used should be customized by the Mutant Lord.

After selecting a creature as the progenitor, the Mutant Lord then rolls or selects mutations and drawbacks to create the first generation. We generally do this for three to five creatures but you can create as many as you want. We also freely admit to fudging some die rolls to make the results more interesting, although we find some randomly-created creatures provide inspiration as well. After writing up the stat blocks for the first generation, select those that have the best chance for survival and/or those that are very well-adapted to their habitats and do the process over again for generation 2. Some of the mutations and drawbacks from generation 1 may be removed if the results conflict with them or if the ML has something specific in mind. And so on and so forth with each generation.

Those are not real generations, of course, they are the point at which mutation causes the formation of a new species or new individual creatures. Most mutants in some *Mutant Future* settings are individuals and not species found in any numbers. We simply use the term because of the analogy to a family tree.

As you read our creations, you will notice that some branches are much larger than others. This is due to extinction because of crippling drawback combinations — something that hit the yellowjackets many times — or boredom with the results. Several branches of the yellowjackets did not inspire us in the least and we can say that there are plenty of undescribed species because of that. The nettle family suffered from both as well and that is why there are only two generations. And as for the feather shrub, one branch became much more interesting than the others combined. Do not be afraid to drop lines or introduce new parent species that will provide additional mutations. Your creations should be under your control. Just don't forget that the randomness of rolling on the charts may provide some interesting results two or more generations after the one you are working on.

As with evolution, the later generations do not have to replace the earlier ones. Out of the 40 yellowjackets described, the only ones that are replaced are the firecracker and spark wasp, the latter because of its weak immune system. Because of this, many different related species of mutant can be found even within the same habitat. Player characters may encounter many similar species that are from the same family or different ones. Convergent evolution is very possible, depending on the charts used to design the creatures.

Also, if you want to skip generations to reach a specific end point, go ahead. We considered it several times and decided against it because these examples are meant to showcase the concept rather than fit into the author's typically weird settings. As in the house sparrow family, some end points may be specific, as they represent breeding attempts using mutagens to provide genetic novelty (i.e., new mutations). With such a capacity, some cultures in *Mutant Future* may have livestock that is very well-adapted to the function the breeders have envisioned. Of course, some drawbacks may be very difficult — if not impossible — to entirely remove from the gene pool and will pop up as throwbacks

from time-to-time.

Some other examples of livestock and beasts of burden might include a town that uses giant spiders to ride and draw carts, another town that uses 10-legged fish in the same ways but also milks them, mountain nomads that try to breed larger and larger birds to carry as much of their goods as possible, and hyperintelligent plants that are trying to breed a human population to be more carnivorous by dipping a few into the local toxic waste pit and seeing if any useful mutations result.

Here is an example of how it would work. A breeder wants to make his herd of ant-rat beasts tougher to deal with the ghostly flying plants that prey on them. He has 100 heads and takes five to run through the local radiation field. He keeps them separate and checks for any mutations or drawbacks daily for a month. If anything really bad happens to any of the irradiated animals — such as the negative empathy drawback — the breeder culls them and burns the bodies.

If anything really useful appears, he starts using them in very controlled breeding. If nothing useful and nothing really harmful appears, he returns the beasts to the herd and selects a few more to try again. He may be surprised when the herd produces new kinds of mutants in that case. Hopefully, they will not eat him and the landscape as well.

THE MUTANT HERD CONCEPT

With so many mutagens floating about, there is always the possibility that a group of animals or plants may have different mutations from that of the general population. A herd of mutant deer, for example, covering 250 square miles, could have a total population of 3,000 and a dozen or more subpopulations because of mutation. There could be deer that fly, those that eat the top leaves of trees by climbing to them, or even burrowing deer. But they are all still deer and may be inter-fertile.

Another example would a school of fish, which could have air-breathing members that flop onto land and draw prey close enough that tentacled fish can grab them. The deeper divers collect corals to make nests on the mud flats the school hunts on. There are even a few salamander-like fish that hunt on land and bring back some of the carcasses so that the rest can feed, though only in times of need.

There may even be species that prey upon their own kind exclusively. Or predators and parasites that have adapted to consuming the flesh of lower-order predators (on the food chain) or herbivores. Carnivorous cows, herbivorous tigers, butterflies that suck the blood of caterpillars, and such are all fodder for Mutant Lords wanting a setting filled with creatures that will amaze and probably confound his or her players.

The main question a Mutant Lord should ask of himself while considering this concept is, "Does it apply to most social creatures?" It can be a lot of work to populate a region or world if every creature is unique enough to have its own statistics block. There are some