

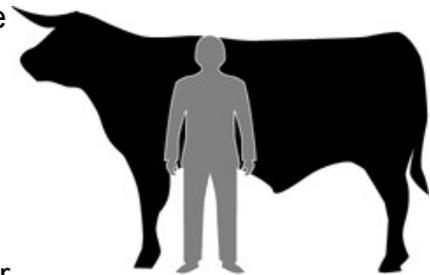
CREATURES OF THE WILD SOUTHWEST

This document is a guide to some of the usual (and more unusual) animals to be found in the Southwest. Stats are not provided - it should be fairly simple to adapt existing creature profiles from your system to match the descriptions below (suggested models to base such adaptations on are listed at the end of this file).

Many of the creatures described below are mutant forms of existing Australian wildlife. Those unfamiliar with such creatures should do some basic research to familiarise themselves before creating stats or more detailed descriptions for their players.

Aurochs:

Aurochs are a large variety of cattle, found throughout the Southern States. Mutated descendants of domestic cattle, they have reverted to a more primitive form, being roughly three metres in length and standing two metres high at the shoulders. They are also a lot hairier and shaggier than pre-war cattle. They are used for all the tasks formerly carried out by horses, pulling carts, ploughing fields and as pack animals. Some people do ride them, but they don't make particularly good mounts - it's more usual to hook one up to a buggy if you want to get around. An Auroch cow produces roughly twice the milk that a pre-war cow did, and the milk is higher in nutritional value, an adaptation to harsh conditions of the post-war nuclear winter.



Bandicoots:

Bandicoots have always been scavengers, but the twenty year nuclear winter made them far more daring and aggressive. Whereas pre-war bandicoots would flee on being disturbed in their scavenging, post-war bandicoots will savagely attack, biting and scratching viciously. While an individual bandicoot is not much of a threat (apart from in the Radlands, where they grow to the size of dogs), they tend to scavenge in packs of up to twenty members, well capable of overbearing and savaging a solitary traveler. Two or three people are killed each year by bandicoots - generally considered a very embarrassing way to die. Keep your packs and supplies well guarded, and don't leave food scraps around the camp unless you want to share a similar fate.

Blue Tongued Dragon:

Mutated descendants of the ordinary blue tongued lizard (which still survives unchanged) blue tongued dragons can reach up to five metres in length. They are docile and inoffensive, unless attacked, in which case they fight back with powerful bites, and by using their stumpy tail as a club. They are not particularly fast, but their huge size gives them massive strength, and their scales offer protection against many types of firearms. Some people hunt dragons, but true outdoorsmen regard such folk with scorn. There's no skill in killing what is essentially a large, harmless lizard.

Death Birds:

A large variety of Emu (up to three metres tall), the death bird is a dangerous foe to be avoided whenever possible. They inhabit the salt plains at the edge of the Desert, and

travel in mobs of up to about forty. They will not attack if left alone, but can be highly territorial, particularly in the breeding season, making travel in the semi-desert regions hazardous in Autumn. When sufficiently provoked they attack with savage kicks - a single well placed kick from a death bird can disembowel a full grown man. They may also attempt to peck out an opponent's eyes. Running is usually no defence, as a death bird can run at close to thirty kilometres an hour for extended periods. Some travelers suggest falling to the ground and playing dead when facing death birds, others maintain that this is nothing but a great way to get yourself killed. Use your own judgment.

Drop Bears:

Nobody believes in drop bears.

Giant Bats:

Although their existence is not confirmed, many sightings of giant bats have been reported over the years. Most stories come from the forests of D'Entrecasteaux and the Warlord Realms, although they have also been seen in the coastal dunes to the south and a few reports exist from other areas. They are black in colour, very fast moving and their wingspan is reported at somewhere between one and ten metres - the smaller figures are considered much more likely. They seem to favour river valleys, particularly the upper Donnelly, and as with most bat species the best time to sight them is around dusk or dawn.

Giant Echidnas:

The giant echidna is one of the oddest of all mutations. It is, to all intents and purposes, a normal echidna - only freakishly enlarged. A fully grown giant echidna is about the size of a pre-war volkswagon beetle.

Giant Echidnas are largely harmless, and fairly rare. If attacked, they pull in their heads and burrow straight down into the earth, leaving only their spiky backs protruding. As their hide is impenetrable to all but the most powerful firearms there is not much that can be done to harm a giant echidna in this position.

Giant Echidnas tend to avoid human habitation, with the exception of the honey farms of the Frankland River valley. They have a very sweet tooth, and will quite happily rip apart a hive and devour all the honey within, along with as many of the bees they can catch on their long, sticky tongues. A single giant echidna can devastate as many as six or seven hives in a single night. As such, the apiarists of Frankland have developed a number of ingenious defences and hunting methods to deal with the creatures, including pit traps and electric fences.

Gore Horses:

One of the more startling mutations to emerge from the nuclear and biological chaos of the war is the Gore Horse. From a distance it appears to be a normal horse, usually white or grey in colour. On closer approach however it's true nature becomes apparent, as the caked blood and gore around it's mouth, it's sharp teeth and blood red eyes become visible. Closer approach than this is usually fatal, unless you're carrying some heavy firepower and have quick reflexes.

Gore Horses are solitary and very efficient predators. They will hunt down and kill virtually anything up to their own size, harrying it with their jaws, and finishing it off with vicious kicks. They have even been known to prey upon their own species. They move fast, and have lightning quick reactions - there are not many who can tell of surviving a close encounter with one of these creatures.

If you hear hoofbeats or a distinctive high pitched, shrieking neigh while out in the wilds then either start praying or running. Preferably both.

Horses:

Horses are comparatively rare. Although intensive breeding programs have boosted their numbers for military use, there are still not too many around (maybe 500 total throughout the Southern States) and only the richest of individuals can afford to own one personally. Most of the functions formerly carried out by horses (transport, ploughing, etc) are now covered by Aurochs. Horses should not be confused with Gore Horses, at least not by anyone wanting to stay alive for very long.

King Snakes:

The king snake is a large (five to six metres) venomous snake, found throughout the wilds. It is generally brown in colour, although regional variations exists, and is about as thick as a fully grown man's thigh. While slow moving in general, king snakes can strike with stunning speed, delivering enough venom to kill a full grown man or auroch within minutes. They are typically encountered sunning themselves on rock faces, or in the branches of trees. They are unlikely to flee from the approach of humans, but will only attack if provoked or hungry. Happily one decent sized meal (a human, an auroch, a few kangaroos) will support a king snake for several months, so just hope that any you encounter have eaten recently.

Mutants:

It's often said that no two mutants are alike. This is obviously nonsense - if every mutant was different how would they breed? It's more accurate to say that while your odds of surviving one encounter with a mutant is low, the chance of surviving two is almost ridiculous.

Mutants are found almost exclusively in the Radlands, although one will occasionally wander south and terrorise the inhabitants of Capel or Mumballup, or cross the Darlings into the desert. There are probably a few dozen species, but no one has been insane enough to attempt a detailed survey. What can be said is that they tend to be large (usually between the size of a horse and an Indian elephant), are often surprisingly fast moving, and are almost always heavily armed with teeth, claws and horns. They often have hard, bony plates under their skins (making them highly resistant to gunfire) and will attempt to eat almost anything that moves.

Scavs are the only people who regularly encounter mutants. They tend to carry extremely heavy, highly accurate weapons as a consequence.

Panthers:

No one is quite sure where the panthers came from. Some people say they

escaped from zoos and private collections in the chaos of the war. Others say they've always been around, hiding out in the bush. In any case large, black panthers are out there, and though rarely encountered can be very dangerous.

The good news is they tend to avoid humans. Problems only arise when a panther gets too old, sick or injured to hunt normally, and may turn to humans or their domestic animals as an easier source of prey. Children in particular are in danger in this kind of situation - the first sign that a panther has gone rogue is often a child vanishing then being found horribly mutilated halfway up a tree.

Thankfully attacks such as these are increasingly rare, as are sightings of panthers. It is the opinion of those who've studied the matter that the panthers - unsuited to the post-war environmental conditions - are dying out. Some go so far as to say that they are now extinct, the last reliable sighting anywhere in the states being 10 years ago in 2086. Rumours persist however, and only a very foolish traveler would discount their continued existence completely.

Pigs:

Pigs remain fundamentally unchanged. They are slightly smaller and thinner than pre-war pigs, being descendants of feral pigs and escaped domestic pigs tough enough to survive post war conditions. Most pigs are raised in Denmark State.

Sanguaroos:

Perhaps the most dangerous animal of the wilds is the Sanguaroo, also called the vampire kangaroo. In open combat the Gore Horse is probably deadlier, but the danger of the Sanguaroo is that it rarely engages in open combat. Usually the first anyone knows of a Sanguaroo attack is one of their companions stating up from sleep, gurgling and choking with their throat cut - if they haven't been targeted themselves that is.

Sanguaroos are highly intelligent predators about the size of a normal grey kangaroo. They can jump and kick just as effectively as their vegetarian kin - however this is not their preferred method of hunting. They operate in small packs of up to six or seven members and are almost unnaturally stealthy, well able to sneak up on most prey while it's sleeping. Once close enough they use their sharp foreclaws to slash it's throat, before leaping out of reach and waiting for the creature to collapse. They then move in on mass and lap up the blood, often cutting additional slashes in the body to get at every last drop.

Sanguaroos are remarkably intelligent. There are reports of them sneaking up on sentries and slashing their throats from behind, or quietly cutting through tent fabric to get to those sleeping within. Evidence also suggests that they are capable of co-ordinated attacks, positioning themselves one to each sleeper and slashing all throats simultaneously on some kind of signal. All of the States currently offer a bounty of \$100 per Sanguaroo head presented, although they do not recommend hunting them in groups of less than eight highly armed professionals.

Sheep:

Sheep remain fundamentally unchanged. They are most common in Pallinup State and are used for mutton and wool. Killing of lambs for meat is uncommon, in the

immediate aftermath of the war many surviving animals were rendered sterile by fallout and biological agents - hence lambs were too valuable to eat. Although the situation is better now, the habit has continued. Lamb is eaten only on very special occasions.

Wild Aurochs:

Wild Aurochs inhabit the semi-arid lands between the states and the Desert. They travel in herds of up to 30, with one dominant male bull. They are fundamentally the same as their domesticated kin, however are far more territorial and dangerous. Both bulls and cows will readily charge if they feel threatened, and are easily capable of trampling and goring a fully grown human to death. If a herd of wild aurochs is encountered, the best policy is to back away slowly, not making any sudden moves.

Wild Pigs:

Wild pigs are fairly small, but are very fast, very powerful and insanely vicious. They live in family groups of between five and twenty, with one dominant male boar. The boars are armed with sharp tusks, and attack by charging suddenly out of the undergrowth. They are easily capable of knocking a fully grown man to the ground, often breaking one or both legs in the process. They are fiendishly crafty, often circling around hunters and attacking from the rear. Some people hunt wild pigs, but this is considered foolish as their flesh is so parasite ridden as to be virtually inedible.

Yahoos:

Yahoos may or may not exist. Some claim they're just a fireside story, used to frighten children. Others insist that they are real, and some even claim to have seen them for themselves. If they do exist, there probably aren't many of them, which would account for their semi-legendary status.

Yahoos are supposed to be a kind of wild primate. Some say they're mutated descendants of humans, others of apes and monkeys released from animal parks and zoos in the chaos of the war. In any case they are said to be slightly shorter than humans, very hairy, foul smelling, and to travel in small packs. They are said to attack travelers for no discernible reason and be very vicious. If you're traveling through the wilds, keep an eye out - particularly at night.

OTHER CREATURES

A number of other, less unusual creatures inhabit the Southwest. The following list can be used for populating scenes and filling in the background of your adventures.

Mammals

Australian Sea Lion - Common on beaches throughout the southwest. Sometimes hunted for their pelts.

Brush-tail Possum - Inquisitive, nocturnal, creatures about the size of a cat with long prehensile tails. Often found living in roofs, even in the middle of towns.

Chuditch (Western Quoll) - The chuditch is a nocturnal, arboreal, cat-like predator. It has dark fur, with bright white spots scattered across its back. It is found mostly in forests and woodlands.

Numbat - A small marsupial termite-eater, around the size of a large rat, with a brush-like tail. Striped across its hindquarters in black and white. Found almost exclusively in the forests of D'Entrecasteaux, and the symbol of that state.

Red Kangaroo - The largest species of kangaroo, with males reaching almost two metres in height. As the name would suggest they have red-brown fur. They can be dangerous in the breeding season (a good kick from a large male can kill) and are found in small groups, mostly in the arid regions on the edge of the Desert.

Short-beaked Echidna - The echidna (sometimes called the "spiny anteater") is a small, ground dwelling animal - about 40 centimetres long - covered in spines similar to those of a porcupine. If threatened it will either roll into a spiny ball, or burrow down into the soil leaving only its back protruding - this process can be so quick that it appears to 'sink' into the ground. It is nomadic with no fixed territory - although females raise their young in a burrow - and can be found anywhere with a good supply of ants and termites. The echidna dislikes extremes of temperature, hibernating in cold weather, and becoming nocturnal in hot weather.

Western Grey Kangaroo - The western grey is the most common species of kangaroo found in the Southwest. It stands up to 1.5 metres in height, and ranges between grey and light brown in colour. It lives in groups of up to about 15, and is most active around dawn and dusk, sleeping in the shade for most of the day.

Birds

Emu - A large flightless bird, similar to (though slightly smaller) than the African ostrich. An emu stands anywhere up to two metres high and its body is covered with shaggy brown feathers that resemble fur. It is most common in the Settlements and on the edge of the Desert, where hunting for its meat, leather and oil is a common activity. A fully grown emu can easily outrun a human over short distances, and its powerful kick can

prove fatal. Emu is pronounced "eem-you", not "ee-moo".

Malleefowl - The malleefowl is a ground dwelling bird about the size of a chicken. Its excellent camouflage means it is rarely seen, however its nest mounds - piles of dirt and organic matter up to 60 centimetres high - are often stumbled upon, particularly in the Settlements and Porongurup State (where it is the unofficial state bird).

Laughing Kookaburra - A large species of kingfisher universally known for its laughing call, which can be heard at dawn and dusk. It eats lizards, snakes and small mammals, and has even been known to steal meat cooking on an unguarded campfire.

Wedge Tailed Eagle - At up to 2.5 metres in wingspan the largest raptor in Australia. Dark red/brown in colour with a distinctive wedge shaped tail. Often seen soaring on thermals high above the Settlements.

Galah - A common (and noisy) species of cockatoo with grey wings and back, a pink body and a white crest. Found in large flocks everywhere except the Desert. Known for their playful behaviour and the massive noise they can generate.

Australian Magpie - A medium sized black and white bird which is often heard caroling at dawn and dusk. In the breeding season (spring) it defends its nest aggressively, swooping without warning on passers by. Serious injury can result if the magpie misjudges the distance and actually hits the head or face with it's large, pointed beak.

Fairy Penguin - The smallest of the world's penguins at only 40 centimetres high. It nests in burrows dug into the dunes at the back of beaches, and is most often seen returning to them at dusk.

Black Swans - Australian swans have black plumage and bright red beaks with a white strip at the tip.

Reptiles

Blue Tongued Lizard - The blue tongued (or stump tailed) lizard is a large variety of skink, growing up to about 60cm in length. It has a triangular head, a stumpy tail, and large, shingle-like scales. It is docile unless provoked, in which case it will stick out its large blue tongue and hiss in an attempt to scare away its foe. Blue tongues make excellent pets, and are welcomed by smart gardeners as they are particularly fond of slugs and snails.

Dugite - The dugite is a venomous snake, growing to a maximum of about two metres long. It has a small head, and colours vary between grey, green and brown. It is usually found in sandy areas, and without rapid treatment its venom can cause heart fibrillation and death.

Death Adder - The death adder is a short, stocky, venomous snake with a triangular head and a short spine on the end of its tail. It doesn't grow much larger than 90

centimetres in length and has large black bands around its body, which is usually grey or red. The death adder is one of the most venomous snakes in the world, those bitten can suffer total paralysis and respiratory failure in as little as 6 hours. At least half of all bites are fatal - even with treatment. Death adders are nocturnal, and more common in arid regions.

Goanna - The goanna is a large monitor lizard, growing up to about 1.5 metres long. It hunts smaller creatures of all kinds, but is fond of carrion. It can move surprisingly fast across short distances, and smaller specimens will often race up trees to avoid danger (they occasionally mistake humans for trees, and will attempt to scale them instead). If cornered, a goanna will rear up on its hind legs and hiss alarmingly. A goanna bite sometimes has trouble healing due to the mild toxin they secrete from their mouths. Goanna fat is a traditional liniment for aches and pains.

King Brown Snake - The king brown (sometimes called the mulga snake) is a large, venomous snake, usually between 2.5 to 3 metres in length. It tends to live under rocks, fallen logs or other debris and can be recognised by the distinctive crosshatching pattern of its scales and a bulge behind the eyes. King brown venom is comparatively weak, but this is more than made up for by the massive quantities generated - when biting, a king brown will often hang on and chew to inject more. Pain, bleeding, kidney failure and muscle damage are the usual symptoms, which often prove fatal without treatment.

Tiger Snake - The tiger snake is a venomous snake, usually found near water. It usually has a greenish yellow belly, and is banded in brown and yellow across its back, although the intensity of the banding varies through the year. It is highly aggressive, and will often advance on threats, rather than fleeing. Tiger snake bites are fatal in almost half of all untreated cases, usually from bleeding and respiratory failure.

Other

Redback Spider - A cousin of the American black widow, the redback is the Southwest's only venomous spider. It spins disorganised, tangled webs in dark nooks and crannies, and can be recognised by the bright red hourglass marking on its abdomen. Redback bites are very painful, but most people bitten will suffer no major effects, only feeling mildly ill for one or two days. The young, the old or the already sick however can be in real danger, and may collapse and die within a few hours. Redbacks will generally only bite if provoked (sticking one's hands into logs or under rocks without checking first counts as provocation), but sometimes shelter in shoes and clothing left lying on the ground. Putting on such clothes without shaking them out first is a great way to get bitten.

Ferals

A number of introduced species can be found running wild in the Southwest. The most common are rabbits, which can be found everywhere. Packs of wild dogs can be encountered in the Settlements and on the edge of the desert and a few foxes may be found in the coastal dunes of D'Entrecasteaux, but they are almost extinct. Cats are not common away from settlements - the feral population was hunted to almost extinction

during the Nuclear Winter. Rats and mice are of course found anywhere humans are.

Creatures NOT found in the Southwest

A number of iconic Australian animals are **not** found in the Wild Southwest. Koalas and platypuses only ever existed on the east side of the continent. Wombats occasionally wandered into the far east of what would become Pallinup State, but their habitat is now uncrossable desert and they're long gone. Purebred dingos were rare before the war, those that survived have interbred with other dogs to the point that they're indistinguishable. Do not use these species in your games (or at least not unless you want to look like a fool).

SUGGESTED MODELS

Aurochs:

To create stats for an auroch start with a bull or ox and boost its stats appropriately. Alternatively if your system has a profile for the original European aurochs, use that instead.

Bandicoots:

Large, swarming rats are a good base for bandicoots, although any small mammal that attacks in packs will do.

Blue Tongued Dragon:

A slow moving giant lizard with tough armour and a club tail will pass for a blue tongued dragon. If you have access to dinosaur stats, a slowed down akylosaur might be a good match.

Death Birds:

Start with an ostrich and make it terrifying. Alternatively stats for any of the phorusrhacid 'terror birds' would be a perfect match.

Giant Bats:

This one is fairly obvious - use stats for a giant bat. If your system doesn't have one, scale up a normal bat, or improvise.

Giant Echidnas:

It's unlikely any game system has stats for a normal echidna, let alone a giant one. The best bet might be to find stats for an ankylosaur, chop off it's tail, and block up its mouth so it can't bite.

Gore Horses:

Start with a horse, and then turn it into a blindingly fast, blood thirsty psychopath.

King Snakes:

Any giant snake will do. Make sure its highly poisonous.

Sanguaroos:

Few if any game systems are likely to include killer kangaroos. Take the profile for a wallaby or small kangaroo, and work from there to make it truly terrifying.

Wild Pigs:

Most systems would have stats for wild boars.

Yahoos:

Any wildman type creature would do for yahoos, although keep in mind that they're shorter and smaller than humans. A vicious chimpanzee would also be a good match.