

A FIELD GUIDE TO CREATURES OF THE HYBORIAN AGE

A DETAILED STUDY OF MAN-APES FOR CONAN THE ROLEPLAYING GAME, PART I

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It was covered with black hair, from which small pig-like eyes glared redly; its nose was flat, with great flaring nostrils; its loose lips writhed back, disclosing huge yellow fangs, like the teeth of a dog.

- Rogues In the House, Robert E. Howard

II OVERVIEW

Deep in the steamy jungles of the south live beasts that are spoken of only in whispers by civilised people. Among the jagged mountains of eastern Zamora and Hyrkania lurk the hunched forms of creatures so terrible that travellers do not dare traverse the crags alone. They are the man-apes: the degenerate reminders to present-day Hyborians of their primitive relatives. Modern observers would call them the 'missing link', the stepping-stone between true apes and humans. The truth about their past, however, is far more disturbing. Whatever their origins, they are fearless and ferocious, possessing Herculean strength and posing a constant threat to any adventurer travelling in their shadow.

General Physical Appearance:

From a distance, or from behind, man-apes might be mistaken for muscular, squat humans. The stance of all man-apes is somewhat hunched, but, unlike true apes, only rarely do they walk upon their knuckles. Instead, with their strong and nearly straight legs, they are able to walk mostly upright, as well as leap and even run with ease (albeit using a somewhat awkward gait). Generally, man-apes have broad shoulders, long, brawny arms and proportionally shorter legs than humans. The

muscle structure of their massive chest is so pronounced that they are said to look almost as if they have been chiselled from stone. In all man-ape species, a distinct layer of hair covers the body in thick coarse mats, which are especially dense along the back, arms and legs. The colour of this hair depends on the type of man-ape being discussed; but is generally brownish, black or grey.

Like true apes, man-apes have flat noses, pronounced brow ridges and sloping foreheads. Generally speaking, their eyes are small, often described as 'pig-like.' Their jaws are prominent, with large, thick lips used primarily to manipulate food while eating. They are described as having yellow teeth, with enlarged canines that can rip flesh from bone. Finally, the physical characteristic that most distinguishes man-apes from true apes or humans are their thick, sharp claws that resemble

the talons of eagles. Although they make no weapons of steel, these large claws can be utilised as such with equally devastating results.

Black Man-Apes of Zamora:

Although reported to exist throughout the southern lands, these beasts are considered to be of Zamora as that is where they seem to be most common. Although called black man-apes because their hair and skin is generally dark charcoal or black in colour, there are reports of dark brown and rust-coloured individuals in the lands of Kush and the Black Kingdoms. They are found most commonly in mountainous regions, where they are reported to live in





groups. Yet, it is not known if the beasts prefer these habitats, or if they are merely forced to live there due to persecution by humans. This notion stems from the fact that the few individuals encountered in the far south all inhabit dense jungles. Black man-apes are the most hairless species existing in Hyboria, not surprising based on their preference for warm climes. They are also the most upright in their stance among man-apes, and have longer legs than their grey relatives (although not quite proportionally as long as humans). Because of this, it is somewhat understandable that black man-apes are mistaken for humans at first glance. Furthermore, it is believed that they are slightly less powerful than the species that exist in the east. They are reported to reach average heights of over seven foot six inches and weigh over 400 pounds.

Black man-apes are territorial and violent by nature. They are also regarded as the man-ape species with the most advanced intellect. In addition, it seems they have little fear of humans, and occasionally venture too close to civilisation. These traits make them incredibly dangerous to mankind. The Zamorians have taken

great pains to eradicate black man-apes from their lands, and will kill them on sight. This fact, coupled with the man-apes' predilection for wandering near human civilisation, has taken a toll on their number. Consequently, the beasts are much less common than their grey cousins. It has been reported that efforts have been made by the foolhardy to train these creatures as one would a dog. It is beyond doubt that black man-apes are smart enough to be trained; yet their base animal instincts, coupled with the simple human emotions that they retain from their ancestors, make them unpredictable.

Therefore, it is not unexpected that all attempts to habituate these creatures to domestication have ended badly.

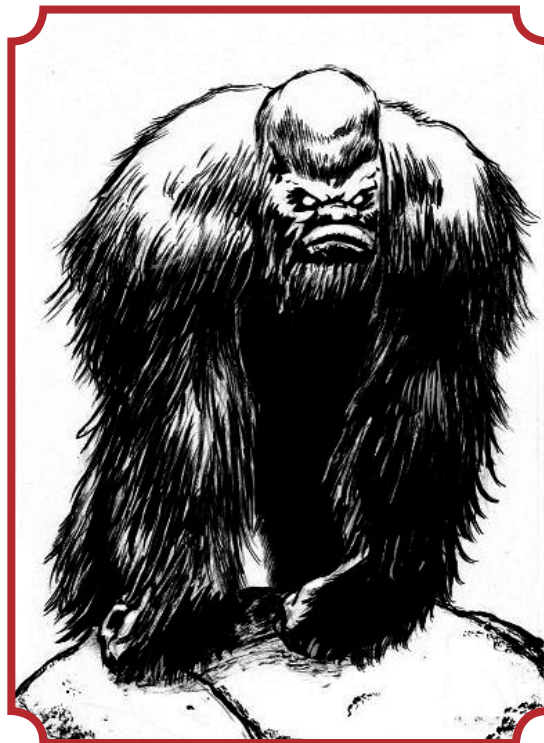
Grey Man-apes of the East and Yahtis:

Grey man-apes are often regarded as true apes, similar to gorillas. Their evolutionary record shows that this is untrue, and their physiognomy is much closer to black man-apes than gorillas (the explanation for which will be given shortly). Most grey man-apes seem concentrated to the dense forests or jungles east and south of the Vilayet Sea, although there are reports of them inhabiting nearby mountain ranges as well.

As their name suggests, these creatures have hair and skin that is grey in colour and much lighter than that of the black man-apes. Furthermore, their fur appears to be much thicker than that of their western cousins, especially in the Yahti

sub-species. Grey man-apes have a much more hunched posture than do black man-apes, with shorter, more crooked legs, which forces them to walk on their knuckles occasionally. They also have broader shoulders and are considered more powerful than their cousins to the west. Their features, which include large tusk-like teeth protruding from their mouths, are less like humans and more like true apes, making them appear bestial and savage to some. It is unlikely that a grey man-ape could be mistaken for a human, even from behind. These beasts reach an average height of six and a half feet and weigh over 550 pounds.

Although they are much more similar to animals in their appearance and habits, grey man-apes are much more common than their black-haired relatives. Their territory is distributed over a much wider area and they seem to exist in greater numbers. The mechanisms behind their relative commonness are not fully understood. Some scholars believe that, because they are more bestial and do their best to shun human civilisation, they do not receive the level of persecution that black man-apes do.



Among the forest-covered hills of the northwest exist wandering bands of ape-men, without human speech, or the knowledge of fire or the use of implements. They are the descendants of the Atlanteans, sunk back into the squalling chaos of the jungle-bestiality from which ages ago their ancestors so laboriously crawled.

Far to the east, the Lemurians, leveled almost to a bestial plane themselves by the brutishness of their slavery, have risen and destroyed their masters. They are savages stalking among the ruins of a strange civilisation.

-The Hyborian Age, Robert E. Howard

Interestingly, there is at least one sub-species of grey man-ape in existence during the Hyborian Age. These are the shaggy ape-men, also called Yahtis by local inhabitants, found in the snow-covered Himelian Mountains. Although as bestial and grey as their contemporaries, Yahtis have hair that is significantly longer and thicker. They also tend to walk slightly more upright than other grey ape-men, an adaptation that some believe makes them better suited for travelling through deep snow.

History and Position in the Animal Kingdom: Recently, archaeological documents have been discovered that help scholars place these beasts, taxonomically, in the Animal Kingdom. While these documents are only summarised here, the importance of their findings to current beliefs regarding archaeology, anthropology and evolution will be evident. Ancient races of humans, such as the Atlanteans, dominated the Pre-Cataclysmic Age. Although slightly different in appearance from current humans of the Hyborian Age, the Atlanteans were fundamentally very similar, and even as technologically advanced. Yet this was before the great cataclysm rocked the face of the earth, changing it forever. The races of men, as they had evolved to be during the Pre-Cataclysmic times, were likewise altered by the upheaval, forever changing their evolutionary path. The turmoil caused most human races of the time, in particular the Atlanteans, to regress back into a

primordial state, degenerating into 'lesser-humans'. The resulting degenerates, it appears, eventually evolved into, what are today known as the black man-apes of Zamora.

As the downfall of Atlantis was occurring, the cataclysm was also forever altering the Atlanteans' contemporaries to the east: The Lemurians. The changing of the world forced the Lemurians to travel even further east, until reaching the very coast of their ancient Thurian continent. Yet, instead of finding peace here, the Lemurians were enslaved by a race of ancient humanoids whose history was lost in ages past. All that is known of these humanoids is that, although they had enslaved the Lemurians, their slaves eventually overthrew them and seized their freedom. Unfortunately, the many years of brutish slavery had degenerated the Lemurians into a semi-human, bestial state. While some of these primordial humans traveled west, evolved and eventually established the present-day land of Stygia, the rest remained in the east, continuing their boorish existence. Those who remained behind became the grey man-apes of the Hyborian Age that exist to the east and south of the Vilayet Sea, including the shaggy sub-species that roam the Himelian Mountains.

Although the subject is hotly debated in academic circles, most scholars consider man-apes a close relative of humans. Among vertebrate animals, they have been

placed within the taxonomic Class Mammalia, being warm-blooded animals with female individuals possessing mammary glands. Much like others of their kind, they are in the taxonomic Order Primates, which also includes prosimians (such as lemurs and tarsiers), monkeys (such as mandrills and baboons), apes (such as chimpanzees and gorillas) and humans. It is their placement within this Order that leads to the greatest disagreement among those that study Taxonomy. While a small group of individuals consider man-apes to be a type of primate completely separate from humans, most believe that they should actually be placed, taxonomically, within the same group, as it appears they evolved from primitive humans. Although it may never be proved which is true, much evidence has been accumulated in favour of the latter hypothesis, including profound skeletal and anatomical similarities between the man-apes and humans. Furthermore, while monkeys and apes are reported to be gentle unless provoked or threatened, man-apes are always ferocious. Most scholars agree that this disposition was acquired from human ancestors, from whom they retain shadows of emotions, such as hate and resentment. Finally, the historic records that have been summarised in the previous paragraph, give evidence that man-apes are more closely related to, and in fact evolved from, men (rather than true monkeys or apes).

II. ANATOMY AND PHYSIOGNOMY

Man-apes have been a source of fascination for scholars over the ages. Thus, it should come as no surprise that certain scholars have gone to great lengths to be able to dissect these animals and thoroughly catalogue their internal anatomy. From these diagrams and notes, inferences regarding their physiognomy have also been made over the years. The findings reported here represent a summary of the most up-to-date and commonly accepted views regarding the subject.

UNIQUE MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Fur: As mentioned earlier, man-apes are mostly covered in coarse hair or fur. This hair, a structure comprised mostly of protein, is slightly different from that found in other types of mammals. Most mammals have two coats of hair, or fur: an outer thick coat for protection, called the guard hair, and an under coat that is soft and dense for insulation, called the under hair. Surprisingly, man-apes, much like true apes and humans, have very little along the lines of under hair. Compared to other mammals, their hair is actually somewhat sparse, especially in the face, chest and belly regions. The exception to this rule is found in the shaggy variety of man-ape inhabiting the Himelian Mountains south of the Vilayet Sea. These creatures do possess long, thick hair (including both guard hair and under hair), which is not surprising considering the frigid regions in which they exist.

The Feet and Hands: The feet and hands are incredibly important features in the every day lives of man-apes. As in true monkeys, apes and humans, these appendages are designed, specifically, to allow manipulation of objects and superior locomotion. Their uses are incredibly diverse, allowing the hands, for example, to be wielded in combat to batter objects, or for tasks requiring the fine motor skill necessary to peel fruit and crack nutshells (if necessity deems it). The hands of both black and grey man-apes have opposable thumbs, which can be used to securely grasp and hold most objects, and improve climbing ability. The largest difference among black and grey man-apes in regards to these

'The black talons of the monster and the awful grasp of those misshapen hands ripped and tore at him.'

-Rogues in the House, Robert E. Howard

appendages lies in the feet. Grey man-apes, being more prone to dense forests and jungles, where they climb frequently, also have a large inner-toe that is opposable. Thus, the feet can be used to grasp items as efficiently as the hands, making these beasts superior climbers to their western relatives.

The Claws: The presence of enlarged nails, or claws, is a feature ubiquitous among man-apes (be they black or grey). In fact, their claws are reported to be so long and sharp that they are often referred to as appearing 'talon-like'. Despite this, however, it is likely that a variation exists in the length and sharpness of these claws among individuals, and they range in length from 3 to 4 inches (7.5 to 10 cm). Like most fingernails and claws found in vertebrate animals, they are made primarily from keratin (a protein-based substance similar to that used found in the horns of bull cattle). However, what is most interesting about these claws is that their upper surface (for example, the surface on the same side as the knuckle) has an extra layer of protective enamel compared to the bottom surface. This added enamel better protects the nail from breaking off at the base during daily use, limiting breakage to the most distal points of the nail. This effectively keeps the nails long and sharp, which is important for man-ape survival. After all, a man-ape with many broken claws cannot as adequately defend or feed itself.

The claws evolved their shape primarily for hunting prey, rather than

protection. Although a formidable hunting adaptation, there is little doubt that man-apes employ these claws as offensive weapons as well, should the need suit them. In nearly all reports of attacks on humans, the man-apes in question used their claws frequently: both to help secure their grip on the victim, while inflicting significant amounts of damage through lacerations or disembowelment.

UNIQUE SKELETAL STRUCTURES

The Skeleton: Because they are related to modern humans, there should be little surprise that man-ape skeletons are very similar in appearance to those of most Hyborians (this is especially true in the case of the black man-apes of Zamora). However, unlike the relatively delicate skeletons of humans, those of man-apes are remarkably dense. There are several advantages to this enhancement: firstly, it makes the beasts more robust to damage from falling or being attacked by prey. The skull, for example, is so thick that it is very resilient to attacks from bludgeoning-type weapons. The downside to this quality is that such thickness in the brain case leaves less room for the brain itself. Many scholars believe that the evolution of thick skulls in these creatures is inversely related to the size of the brain, and probably the size of their intellectual capacity. Secondly, having dense bones is an adaptation that helps support the great weight that these animals possess. The orientation of these bones is also believed to be for supporting the added stress and weight associated with a bipedal (in other words, walking upright) stance.

The Teeth: Most vertebrate animals have teeth that are unique from the rest of the Animal Kingdom. This

'Its feet and hands were more manlike than those of a gorilla, the great toes and thumbs being more like those of a man than an anthropoid.'

-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp



other words, the mouth is filled with teeth of different shapes and sizes that represent their specific functions. For example, canines and incisors are sharp and used to tear off bits of food, while premolars are multi-cusped and used to shear bits of food into more manageable sizes, and so on. Man-apes, and primates in general, are no exception in this regard. However, the teeth of man-apes are unique enough that they are probably the skeletal feature that most separates them from other primates. The majority of primates are omnivorous (in other words, consuming both plant and animal material), which is reflected in the shape of their teeth: relatively large canines and sharp incisors for tearing off bits of flesh, yet relatively flat and broad molars for grinding vegetation. Man-apes, in contrast, are strict carnivores. They eat no vegetation and their dentition

reflects that. In fact, the shape of their teeth more closely resembles that found in other strict carnivores that are of no relation to primates (for example, dogs, wolves, lions and tigers). Man-apes have sharp, pointed incisors and very large, yellowish canines designed for tearing large chunks of flesh from their prey. They have uniquely shaped premolars and molars in both the upper and lower jaw that, when brought together while chewing, creates a shearing action (like that of a meat scissors). This helps these beasts chew their usually tough food to the point that it can be easily swallowed. Only the last set of molars in each jaw vaguely resemble those found in omnivorous primates. Although it is believed that they are residual (their shape coming from human ancestors) the function of these teeth is no longer for grinding vegetation, as is the case in humans. Instead, in man-apes these molars are shaped as such to crack open bones for acquiring the nutrient-rich marrow within.

UNIQUE INTERNAL ANATOMICAL ELEMENTS

In many ways, the organ systems of man-apes are similar to other mammals, especially humans. For example, the respiratory system, while very complex and efficient, is very similar to that found in many mammals, especially primates. The glands, including sweat, scent and sebaceous glands, in their morphology are also not largely unique among mammals. Thus, these organs will receive little attention in the following paragraphs.

The Digestive System: The digestive system of man-apes is somewhat unique compared to that of other large primates, such as gorillas. This is because gorillas eat large amounts of vegetation, which requires a unique digestive system. For example, properly digesting vegetation usually requires a large or even multi-chambered stomach that is specialised for breaking down the tough cellulose found in plant material. Creatures with diets consisting mostly of

'At any rate, he struck when I least expected it. Last night he appeared to go suddenly mad. His actions had all the appearance of bestial insanity, yet I know that they must have been the result of long and careful planning.'

'Apparently, his semi-brain retained impressions of hate, resentment, and some sort of bestial ambition of its own.'
-Rogues in the House, Robert E. Howard

animal material, such as man-apes, have digestive systems that are comparatively simple, as animal-based foods are mostly soft and easier to break down. Thus, carnivorous digestive systems usually have a single-chambered, bag-like stomach, with intestines that have many twists and bends.

The Brain: This is believed to be the man-ape's most extraordinary organ. Compared to their simian cousins, such as gorillas, these beasts have exceptional intelligence, which is especially true of the black man-apes of Zamora, with an amazing memory and the ability to learn from past occurrences. Yet, in relation to humans, most scholars consider their intelligence to be as humans are compared to Gods. These scholars cite the fact that man-apes create neither tools nor weapons, and have no knowledge of fire. They also do not build shelter, aside from the most rudimentary types made from gathered leaves and grasses. Despite this, there is little denying that these creatures possess cunning beyond mere animal instinct. Those who have run afoul of them know that their ability to stalk their prey through observation and learning of the prey's habits is uncanny. The man-ape's aptitude to perform in such a fashion, most scholars believe, is the result of a brain that has evolved from those of humans (albeit in a degenerating fashion). Thus, the capacity of their brain is far superior to any other animals', and may even rival the brain of humans who have been stricken dumb through illness or misfortune. Not only does this large brain offer man-apes incredible

cunning, it also makes complex coordination, behavior and even rudimentary language possible. The specific portions of the brain that are of greatest interest in man-apes are the cerebrum and cerebellum. Both are large and convoluted, similar to humans. This results in man-apes:

- # Having the ability to learn by remembering
- # Being able to possess simple emotions
- # Being capable of fine motor function

This combination of abilities is surpassed only by humans. The downside to having a brain that supposedly evolved from those of humans is that man-apes are believed to retain shadows of certain human emotions (such as anger and hate). It is believed that these 'pseudo-emotions', coupled with raw animal instinct, are what make man-apes incredibly dangerous and unpredictable.

The Sensory Organs:

The eyes of man-apes are particularly interesting in many regards. Although they have little ability to see great distances, their eyes are on the front of their skulls (rather than the sides), creating superior depth perception. Within the eyes of most vertebrates

are two types of photoreceptors: rods (which function better at low light) and cones (which function better under intense light). Man-apes, being fonder of incredibly dark habitats, have a much higher number of rods than cones. Furthermore, man-apes have very acute colour vision. All of these adaptations are thought to have evolved as a means of aiding these beasts in climbing and hunting. There is, however, an aspect of these beast's eyes that is perplexing to many scholars: they are very light sensitive (possibly due to the low number of cone photoreceptors in their eyes). In general, this means that man-apes shun the bright sun and moon, preferring very shrouded and dark habitats. What advantage man-apes gain from being physically uncomfortable in bright light is not wholly understood. It should be noted that Yahtis are occasionally seen out in the open during the day, and it is believed that these creatures feel no negative effects from light.

The senses of hearing and smell in man-apes are acute, but no more so than in true apes or humans. Although these senses are used



incidentally while hunting, they do not seem to be of great importance. It is believed that the advanced nature of their brains compensates for these relatively deficient senses. Thus, they receive no penalty for not being able to smell as acutely as wolves, another carnivorous hunter, because their intellect makes up for this shortcoming.

UNIQUE PHYSIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Metabolism: As has been stated previously, man-apes are mammals and, thus, endothermic (in other words, warm-blooded). This means that their body produces its own heat internally, through the use of physiological processes. This is in contrast to ectothermic (cold-blooded) animals, such as reptiles, which must rely on an outside heat source to warm their body temperatures to an acceptable level. Often, this outside heat source is the sun, or a warm substrate of some form. There are many advantages to endothermy. Endothermic animals are not restricted in their geographic distribution by the annual air temperature of the region. They also generally have higher levels of activity, resulting in more complex behaviors and extended periods of sustained action. For example, man-apes can run for much longer amounts of time than a crocodile. Although the crocodile is capable of quick, explosive movements, it cannot sustain them. The downside to endothermic metabolisms, however,

is that any animal possessing them must fuel that constantly working metabolism with a steady supply of food. Thus, endotherms must eat constantly, and man-apes are no exception. Therefore, food is a limiting resource for these beasts, and often leads to territorial bouts among man-ape tribes living in close quarters.

III. THE ECOLOGY OF MAN-APES

Geographical Distribution- As was mentioned previously, man-apes, as a group, have a much wider distribution than they are given credit. Although rarely common in the lands where they exist, man-apes can be found throughout most of the regions south of Stygia, from Zamora east to the coast, and are even reported in the far north and northwest. The only areas where they have not been reported to exist during the Hyborian Age are the mid-latitudes from the Western Sea to Brythunia, Corinthia, Koth, and only rarely in Shem. As was also hinted at earlier, there are some interspecific differences in where types of man-apes will be found, however.

Black Man-Apes: Black man-apes are reported to prefer the

mountainous regions along the eastern border of Zamora (not far from Shadizar) and into Turan. They are also reported sporadically in the Pyrrhenian Mountains east of Khoraja and the Taiaian Mountains near Sygia's northeastern border. Reports are plentiful of isolated black man-ape populations in the lands of Kush, Darfar and Keshan, as well as the Black Kingdoms. However, because a qualified individual has never witnessed one in this region, most scholars refuse to acknowledge that black man-apes are common in the south. Nevertheless, any traveler who has visited these lands frequently reports witnessing them as commonly as birds in some regions and will, without hesitation, call such scholars fools.

Grey Man-Apes and Yahtis: The idea is generally supported that grey man-apes exist in much greater abundance than their relatives to the west. They also have a larger geographic distribution, being found throughout Hyrkania, Iranistan, Vendhya, Khitai and eastern Hyperborea. Though rumors exist of them being found as far to the northeast as Nordheim and even Cimmeria, these reports are unsubstantiated. It should here be noted once more that grey man-apes come in two varieties: the shorthaired and the longhaired (also called Yahtis). While the shorthaired variety is found both in the plains and forest of Hyrkania and Khitai and Veldhya, the Yahti is found strictly in mountains (preferably in colder climes or snow-capped peaks). Thus, the Yahti is often encountered among the Ilbar and Himelian mountains south of the Vilayet Sea, and in the Mountains of the Grey Apes north of the Vilayet sea. They are also reported in the mountains surrounding Panthenia.

'His people dwell far to the east, in the mountains that fringe the eastern frontiers of Zamora.'

-Rogues in the House, Robert E. Howard

'A gray man-ape,' he grunted. 'Dumb, and man-eating. They dwell in the hills that border the eastern shore of this (the Vilayet) sea.'

-Iron Shadows in the Moon, Robert E. Howard

'Conan knew it for what it was: the monster named in myth and legend of the north - the snow ape, the desert man of forbidden Panthenia. He had heard rumours of its existence in wild tales drifting down from the lost, bleak plateau country of Loulan.'

-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp

It was no tree dweller but a beast bred on great plains and gaunt mountains.

-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp

'These creatures always lurk in the deepest woods they can find, and seldom emerge...I'd have had no chance with him among the trees.'

-Iron Shadows in the Moon, Robert E. Howard

Habitat Preferences: Man-apes are highly variable in their preferred habitats, ranging from semi-open plains to dense forest to snow-capped mountains. It is believed that the adaptability of man-apes as a whole stems from their large brains and fine motor skills.

Black Man-Apes: The traditional description of black man-ape habitat includes open steppe, grassland and mountainous crags. While there is little doubt that this species does indeed exist in these habitats, they are also reported in dense southern jungles as well. In mountainous regions, they are more common on westward- and southward-facing slopes. This is probably because

these slopes receive more direct sunlight and are usually warmer, which is particularly important during colder months. Most black man-ape family groups have a large home range that they continuously patrol. Within these home ranges, several different habitat types may be found. Although variation exists among family groups, the majority of the territory in question will almost always consist of protected craggy slopes among high mountain passes. These areas are nearly impossible to traverse for other vertebrates, including humans, making them very secluded spots. Such slopes are usually moderately to heavily vegetated with mostly evergreen trees and scrubby shrubs (such as mountain heath) that prefer higher elevations and rocky soil. Although not known to be as adept at climbing as their eastern relatives, the man-apes of the region are known to use evergreen trees to ambush prey and those who would do them harm. A much smaller portion of the territory usually consists of rolling

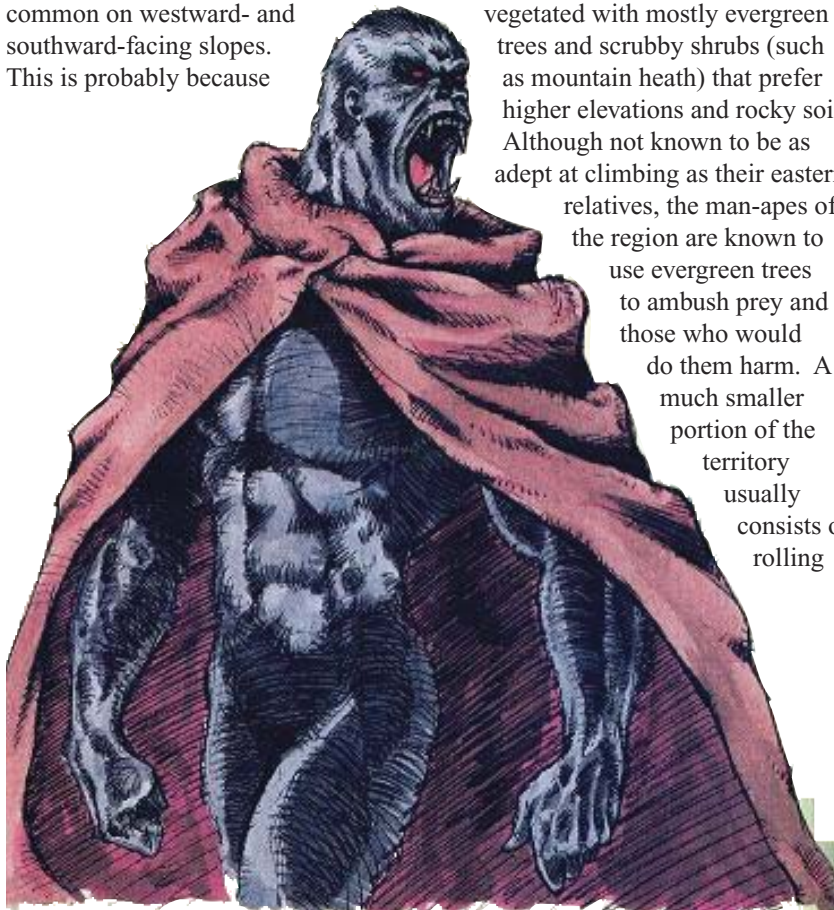
mountain foothills and some sparsely vegetated grassland.

Furthermore, several areas used as refuges by the beasts will also be placed sporadically throughout the territory. These refuges usually consist of a cave that is either hidden or difficult to access that offers the beasts protection. A water source is always nearby, and may even run out from the mouth of the cave itself. Furthermore, these caves are almost always strategically placed in hidden areas near game trails. Thus, both food and water are readily available.

Although not substantiated by qualified scholars, there are reports of southern black man-apes from extremely dense jungles along rivers and tributaries in Kush and the Black Kingdoms. These habitats are said to contain mostly large, old growth trees with massive trunks. The canopies of such regions are usually choked with branches and thick vines, all of which can be used to aid in climbing. Surprisingly, a fair number of reported attacks from these beasts occur on the ground, and not from treetops.

Because a fairly substantial difference exists between the habitats where black man-apes are seen in the south and where they are encountered in the north, there is some speculation if the individuals existing in each region are not separate species in their own right. This notion is further supported by individuals who claim to have witnessed man-apes in these southern regions whose hair is more reddish, or rust-colored, than black.

Grey Man-Apes and Yahtis: Grey man apes are almost always classified as a forest species. However, along the eastern shores of the Vilayet Sea, and some distance inland, they are almost exclusively found on semi-open plains and at the craggy bases of mountains and their associated foothills. Yet, in most of Turan, Hyrkania, and the like, grey man-apes seem to prefer



dense forest with large old-growth trees. Although spending much time on the ground, this type of man-ape is probably more at ease in trees than their western and longhaired cousins. The home ranges of these beasts in the far east contain almost exclusively dense forest or jungle, with thick canopies and ample branches for climbing. In the regions closer to the Vilayet Sea, the home ranges of grey man-apes include a nearly 50:50 ratio of plains and mountain foothill or hills, with less than 10% of the habitat consisting of forest. As in black man-apes, they have multiple refuges located sporadically throughout their home ranges for shelter.

Yahtis are found almost exclusively in the high snowy crags of mountains. They never venture into grassland or dense lowland forest. Their home ranges include almost homogenous habitat, consisting of very sparse vegetation, open plateaus, and cold mountain streams. In very rare occasions, they are found among stands of evergreen trees found along mountainsides. Yet, it is obvious that they prefer open habitats. Their refuges are always along high cliff faces that are very difficult to reach by conventional means.

Territories: Home range sizes are large due to the fact that acquiring sufficient food for family groups can be difficult. These territories can be, on average, anywhere from one to 11 square miles (2.6 to 28.5 square km). As one would imagine, defense of this territory (and its limiting resource: food) from conspecifics and other large carnivorous predators is aggressive. Gray and black man-ape groups will travel throughout their home ranges during the evening, watching for intruders and feeding until reaching one of the many secure refuges positioned sporadically within. Here they will rest during the daylight hours, returning to their nomadic habits once evening comes once more. Despite the type of man-ape being discussed, man-ape refugia

are almost always a cave consisting of a single chamber large enough to house the entire family group. The entrance to the chamber is almost always somewhat concealed by vegetation, or is at such a height as to make it difficult to reach by creatures that are not man-apes. Furthermore, the chamber may be lined with vegetation of some sort, and a refuse pile will always be present, either in or near the chamber. Refuse piles will contain both excrement and remains of food. No attempt is made to hide these and the scent from them can often be overpowering. Territorial boundaries are marked by the pheromones present in urine. Many man-apes are also known to smear excrement on the trunks of trees along the edge of their territories to warn potential intruders.

Although no rigorous data has been collected on the subject, black man-apes of the south would appear to have significantly smaller home ranges than those of their northern counterparts. The sporadic and isolated existences of these southern man-apes may be a possible reason for the comparatively low number of encounters that humans have with them. Small home ranges may also be a result of the incredibly dense vegetation in the habitats where they reportedly make their homes. Such density of plant material could inhibit quick and broad dispersal of this creature. From what reports that have been made, it would seem that this southern cousin spends most of its time on the forest floor, or in the lower limbs of trees. It is believed that they have none of the sporadically placed refuges in their home ranges that their counterparts do, but supposedly traverse the borders of their territory at night, then sleep off of the ground, in whichever tree bough is closest during the day.

Yahtis, it is believed, also differ slightly in their territorial requirements from other man-apes. They are reported to live in smaller social groups than do other types of

man-apes, thus needing less food to sustain them as a unit. Although this might lead one to believe that a smaller home range is required, this is not the case. Yahtis, in fact, have no defined home ranges, but instead live nomadic-type lifestyles (with no refuges) in which they follow herds of game animals for great distances. It is also believed that the need to constantly roam has made Yahtis grow accustomed to being active in daylight, thus they are not negatively affected by light sources as other man-apes are. There has been little evidence to support the occurrence of territorial disputes among Yahtis.

Communication and Social

Interactions: Most communication among man-apes is expressed vocally in the form of grunts, deep scream-like calls, and clicks. Along with the use of urine and feces to mark territory, dominant male man-apes will frequently release a long, resonant bawl while patrolling their territories as a warning to rivals to stay clear. This call is said to be incredibly unnerving and many a traveler has had his blood run cold at its sound. Man-apes also communicate vocally among each other using clicks and soft grunting. Although it is likely that these types of communications are common, man-apes are very secretive when interacting within their groups and humans have seen these behaviors only sparingly.

Aside from vocal cues, man-apes use a significant amount of facial expressions and gestures to express their mood to one another as well as potential threats. To assert dominance or in response to a threat, man-apes will bear their teeth and beat their chests. If this does not work, they will raise their arms above their heads and scream. Finally, as a last resort, man-apes will fly into a violent fit. This fit usually includes screaming, leaping up and down while tearing up vegetation and flinging it at the threat, and also mock charges towards the threat. Generally

such displays are only for show and rarely end in violence (especially when among conspecifics), because the result of injuries acquired during such bouts would surely end in the eventual death of the creature harmed. Yet, for reasons unknown by scholars, man-apes rarely back down from humans and almost always attack them on sight. This is perhaps because man-apes view their simian relatives as either: (1) food, or (2) a threat so substantial that outright attack is always deemed necessary.

There are also physical forms of communication that are used to reinforce social bonds within family groups. This physical communication usually consists of grooming. Among juveniles, 'play fighting' occurs. Play fighting not only strengthens social bonds and establishes a hierarchy among juveniles; it also helps them work on their dexterity and strength from an early age.

Reproduction and Development:

Among groups, reproductive privileges are available first and foremost to dominant males, who sire most of the juveniles in a given family group. Subordinate males and females do reproduce and sire some of the offspring in family groups, but these juveniles are not common.

Reproductive cycles vary depending on the type of man-ape in question. Black man-apes of the south are believed to time reproduction so that the birth of their offspring corresponds with the increased food available after the rainy season. In the north, black man-apes generally breed in late winter/early spring and offspring arrive by late summer. Grey man-apes follow a similar pattern as northern Black man-apes. This pattern is largely unknown in Yahtis; however, they have been witnessed with juveniles at several different times of the year. Thus, it is believed that breeding seasons among Yahtis follow no specific pattern and reproduction occurs when conditions are favourable.

Then the rocky walls of the ravine echoed to the ape's high, penetrating scream as it charged, low-hanging arms swinging wide, yellow fangs bared and dripping.

-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp

The breeding system of these creatures is largely polygynous (one male and many females), yet the alpha female is always first in line to breed with the alpha male during the breeding season. Subsequently, he will breed with one or two other females. The alpha male then jealously guards all of the females he has copulated with, not allowing them to re-mate with others. It is during the mating season that subordinate males most quickly are taught their place in the pecking order, as the alpha male tolerates no contact between them and his harem of females. Polygyny is not seen in Yahtis, who generally live with only one other female, and perhaps a single offspring.

All man-ape offspring grow quickly. Infants are dependant on their mothers for approximately six months only. After which, they are able to feed on their own, as well as keep up with the group during daily patrolling of home ranges. Male man-apes reach sexual maturity at four years of age. If strong enough, they will be able to contend for the position of dominant male in a group by age six. Females, on the other hand, do not become sexually active until they are at least five years of age.

Mother man-apes, it should be noted, vehemently defend their infants, fighting even to the death to save them from a potential threat. A threatened female man-ape with infant is one of the most terrible and spectacular sights that the natural world has to offer. Usually, a quick and decisive action is taken against any creature (aside from members of the female's family group) to enter her space. The end result usually includes dismemberment of the threat.

PREY, HUNTING, FEEDING HABITS, AND COMBAT

Man-apes are strict carnivores. This curious fact about their eating habits is what separates them most from other primates. Strict carnivores (excluding piscivorous, or fish-eating, mammals) have evolved in only one other group of mammals: the taxonomic Order Carnivora, which includes dogs, cats, weasels and so on. The reason for this obvious example of convergent evolution between two vastly different groups of animals is unknown. However, as stated previously, the teeth of man-apes clearly reflect their carnivorous diet and more closely resemble the teeth of tigers and dogs than other primates. In the wild, man-apes will consume almost any warm-blooded animal that they can capture. While there is a preference for larger prey, they will consume animals as small as rodents, if necessary. Large prey is preferred as it is more likely to offer enough sustenance for an entire family group. Regardless of the region in which they exist, man-apes seem to spend the majority of their time hunting large grazing herbivores. In mountainous regions, these are primarily mountain goats and sheep, as well as deer. Hares, pikas and similar animals will also be consumed if need be. In open habitats, elk or caribou will be consumed by man-apes in northern climes, while animals like buffalo and antelope are taken in southern climes. In areas of dense vegetation, smaller deer-like animals, as well as wild peccary and tapirs, are consumed.

Male man-apes engage in all hunting activity for a family group. Male man-apes rarely hunt alone (the exception being found among Yahtis whose family groups are too small

to permit group hunting). Most man-ape hunting parties consist of two to four large adult males and four to six sub-adults. Generally, the younger males flush the selected quarry towards the older individuals who remain hidden, waiting. When the prey is close enough, the older males strike, often leaping down from tree branches or overhead rock ledges onto the backs of unsuspecting victims. It is during this ambush that the claws are most beneficial. Ambushing man-apes strike first and with deadly accuracy to the region at the base of the victim's skull. The hope is to immediately sever the spine, causing instantaneous death, or piercing the jugular vein/carotid artery, causing the animal to quickly bleed out.

Yahtis hunt alone or in groups of two. They will also ambush prey, but instead of using trees and coordinated attacks, they wait along game trails in the craggy mountain ranges for prey to come to them. Most often, they will hide in crevices or on ledges above game trails, remaining upwind, with large boulders that they throw down at the prey, aiming for the head.

If man-apes are not successful in an overhead ambush attack to the neck, they may then attempt a frontal attack. In this situation, the claws are employed in the hopes of making a swift strike to the throat, or a disemboweling strike to the mid-section. Man-apes rarely grapple one on one with prey items, preferring to use their claws to bring down quarry. Man-apes are, however, incredibly adept grapplers, if the need arises. If ambush attacks are unsuccessful, they will not hesitate to confront human opponents in close-quarter combat. Anyone unfortunate enough to be caught in a wrestling match with a man-ape will likely end up severely maimed, crushed or dead. If able to grab hold of an opponent, man-apes can rip limbs from sockets, slam victims into trees with incredible force or crush them to death in their powerful arms. Therefore, it is in

But its manlike features merely increased the dreadfulness of its aspect, and the intelligence which gleamed from its small red eyes was wholly malignant.

-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp

the best interest of those confronting man-apes in combat to keep the animal at sword's length from himself or herself. This can prove difficult, however, as man-apes will often use their incredible leaping ability to quickly come into grappling range with their opponents. These truths must all be considered carefully by anyone wishing to enter man-ape territory.

Predators: Adult man-apes are believed to have few natural predators. Although it is believed that they may be eaten by larger carnivores, no substantiated reports exist on the subject. Although very rare, dragons possess the size and power to consume man-apes (even adults) very easily, and it is probable that they do so. Juveniles and infants, should they be separated from their parents, are likely to be taken by predators more frequently. It can be imagined that animals such as the large constrictor-type snakes (such as pythons) in the south will eat them, as well as large felines (for example, lions, mountain lions, sabre-tooths) and perhaps boar-things.

Longevity: Compared to other vertebrates, man-apes are fairly long-lived. If they do not meet a premature and violent demise, man-apes can live into their 40's.

Society and Allegiances: Man-apes, whether of the black or grey varieties, usually live in family groups of five to 20 individuals. The only exception to this rule is found in Yahtis, which are generally solitary, or living in groups of three. Within the larger family groups of most black and grey man-apes, a hierarchy exists. There is always a dominant (or alpha) male who has one alpha female and several subordinate females that

he reproduces with. Beneath him live anywhere from three to seven subordinate males, who are either offspring or relatives that were not strong enough to leave their natal family group and found their own. The remainder of a man-ape's family group consists of subordinate females and newborns. Conversely, Yahtis that are not solitary usually exist in small groups consisting of one female, and occasionally their single offspring.

Once reaching sexual maturity, male man-apes are given a choice by the current dominant male: fall into line, or leave. Some young males select a third option: usurping the current alpha male and taking his place as leader of the group. Bouts for leadership of a man-ape family group are violent and rarely end with both contestants still living. For man-apes that do not wish to fight for the leadership of their current family group, they may elect to leave and found their own family group with other subordinate individuals, or attempt to enter a different family group. Existing family groups occasionally adopt new members as long as these outsiders take on a submissive posture when approaching the alpha male and female.

Female man-apes are generally not treated as roughly upon reaching sexual maturity as males. Often females will remain with a group as it can potentially increase the number of partners for the alpha male to mate with and spread his seed.

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