

d12 Monthly

**SWAMP
ISSUE**

Issue 18
November, 2022

RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLES

CREATURES YOU WILL FIND IN THE
WETLANDS

WETLAND FEATURES

IT'S CATCHING

**SIMPLE RULES AND LISTS
FOR DISEASES**

Know your swamp from your marsh

d12 Monthly is a helpful resource for fantasy roleplayers.



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Art

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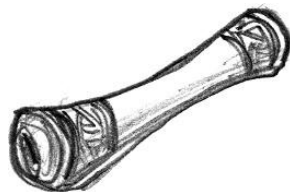
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Unless otherwise mentioned, all articles are written by Russ at YUMDM. Some text from Wikipedia was used for the wetlands article.



The Swamp Issue

This is the first of a series of issues that focuses on the classic terrain. Swamps or marshes (or really, wetlands) are the icky stuff of fantasy.

They are dangerous and deadly, disease-filled, monster-rich environments adventurers continually find themselves in.

I am reminded of a tweet I read recently, where the GM killed more characters in his swamp with disease and leeches than he did the green dragon.

That's what swamps are all about!

Inside this issue you will find a short explainer on the various wetlands, fantasy themes, monster templates, encounter tables, and much much more. I hope your swamps end up even more deadly.

And, as always, happy gaming!

- Russ from YUMDM

<https://yumdm.com/>

https://twitter.com/yum_dm

About Me

I have been roleplaying for over 30 years and DMing for most of those. I have played over 50 different roleplaying games, but my first love is fantasy - it's like coming home.

Other TTRPGs I like: WEG D6 Star Wars, Feng Shui RPG, & Warhammer FRP.

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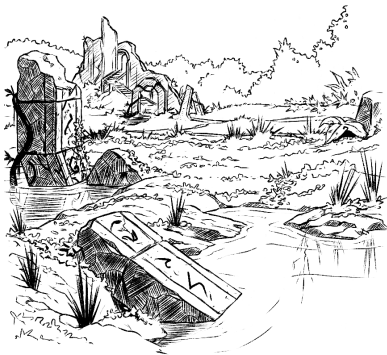
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(Tiers are available to receive a physical copy each month).



What's in a Name?

Types of Swamps



“Swamp” or “marsh” are often terms used in the game, meaning any sort of wetland, but these are just two types of terrain commonly known as wetlands.

There are four main types: swamp, marsh, bog, and fen.

Swamps are basically a forested wetland. They are dominated by water-tolerant woody vegetation such as shrubs, bushes, and trees.

Marshes are wetlands that are dominated by low, soft-stemmed vegetation.

A **Bog** is a wetland that accumulates peat as a deposit of dead plant materials, often mosses.

A **Fen** is a type of peat-accumulating wetland fed by groundwater.

It's not super important to know the exact nature of each of these but to add a touch of

realism to your campaign, it is nice to know the differences, and to include flora and fauna - not to mention monsters - into the correct locales.

Swamps

There are two main types of swamps: forested swamps and shrub swamps.

Forested swamps are freshwater swamps that are inundated with water permanently or seasonally. They consist mostly of wooded trees.

Shrub swamps consist mainly of low-lying shrubs with some wooded trees. They tend to be wetter than a wooded swamp, but not as wet as a marsh (see below).

The water of a swamp may be fresh water, brackish water, or seawater.

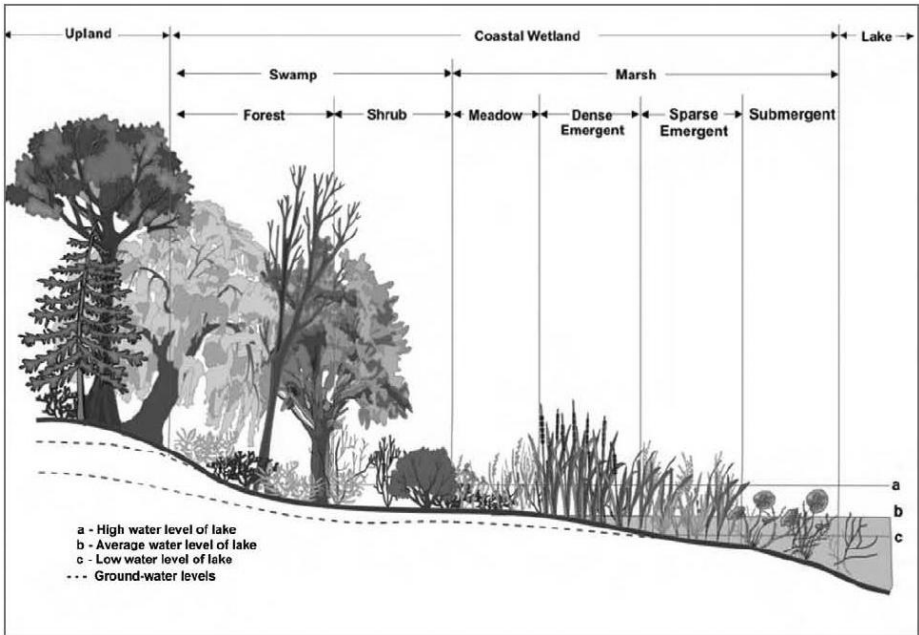
Climate: Swamps can be found in almost any climate (from boreal to tropical).

Geography: Freshwater swamps (see below) form along large rivers or lakes. Saltwater swamps are found along tropical and subtropical coastlines.

Flora & Fauna: Swamps contain a wide variety of plants, animals, and insects, including reptiles, birds, large cats and other predatory mammals.

Marshes

Marshes are often found at the edges of lakes and streams. They are dominated by grasses, rushes or reeds. If woody plants



are present they tend to be low-growing shrubs.

Marshes are good at absorbing high tides and other extreme weather conditions.

There are two main types of marshes: saltwater and freshwater.

Saltwater marshes are found wherever there are sections of protected coastline, in lagoons, estuaries, and on the sheltered side of a shingle or sandspit.

Freshwater marshes are found where low-lying land exists, such as shallow depressions, shallow lake basins, low-lying depressions; or along the fringes of large rivers.

Climate: Marshes can be found in almost any climate.

Geography: They are often found at the edges of lakes and streams.

Flora & Fauna: Marshes contain many species of plants, animals, and insects, including invertebrates, fish, amphibians, waterfowl and aquatic mammals.

Fens

Fens consist of waterlogged soil.

There are two types of fens: rich fens and poor fens. This depends on their nutrient content and their ability to maintain life.

Rich fens contain more nutrients and aren't as acidic, and so tend to contain more diverse wildlife.

Poor fens are more bog-like and tend to be dominated by peat. Poor fens can transition to bogs over time.

Climate: Fens can usually be found in temperate or cold regions.

Geography: Fens can be found almost anywhere, but they are usually located at mid to high latitudes.

Flora & Fauna: Fens contain grass and grass-like vegetation, and contain very high plant diversity, including many wildflowers.

Fens also contain many insects, as well as insect-eating amphibians, birds, mammals and reptiles.

Bogs

Bogs occur where the water at ground level is acidic and low in nutrients. They derive most of their water from rain (as opposed to groundwater).

There are two main types of bogs: valley bogs and raised bogs.

Valley bogs tend to develop in relatively dry and warm climates.

Raised bogs form when peat builds up to a level that causes the land to rise up in a shallow dome of bog peat.

Water flowing out of either bog type has a characteristic brown colour.

Climate: Bogs are usually found in cold or temperate climates.

Geography: Valley bogs develop in gently sloping valleys or hollows, while raised bogs develop from a lake or flat marshy area.

Flora & Fauna: Bogs have distinctive assemblages of animal, fungal, and plant species, and there are many highly specialised animals, fungi, and plants associated with bogs.

Bogs provide habitat for mammals, such as caribou, moose, and beavers, as well as for species of nesting shorebirds. Bogs also contain varied species of reptiles and insects.

Magical Swamps

Some swamps or marshes are beyond the ordinary - they are truly the stuff of fantasy and horror.

These swamps are corrupted and have a sentience that allows them to corrupt others who enter the swamp. They could be haunted, beset with undead, hag-infested, plant-ridden, or just pits of magical diseases.

Use these and the other ideas in the article *Swamps Are Evil!* in this issue to give your wetlands a theme, and then build out your terrifying swamp from there.



Swamps Are Evil!

Fantasy Swamps



While swamps and other wetlands are just another type of environment in our world, fantasy swamps and marshes can be places of pure evil.

Below are some themes you can use to give your wetlands a more fantasy feel, or just to give you some adventure or campaign ideas.

Hag-Controlled

A single, or coven, of hags has taken over the swamp and now controls those within. Any visitors will slowly but surely feel the power and wrath of the hags within.

Crazy Wizard

A mentally unhinged wizard is using travellers and locals in bizarre experiments involving lizard-men, frog-men, and

fish-men; in an attempt to create a new species.

Necromancer's Playground

Infested with undead, the swamp or marsh is a breeding ground of various undead, including undead animals and other creatures. All controlled by a powerful necromancer.

See *Issue 6 of d12 Monthly* for articles on boosting your undead and creating new ones.

Humanoid Home

Home to one or more humanoid species, this swamp is overrun with these beings, who threaten to spill out into the surrounding lands. Be they lizardfolk, bullywugs, axols*, or something more sinister, they will need to be dealt with one way or another.

* See *Issue 10 of d12 Monthly* for more information on these humanoids.

Beast-Infested

From giant crocodiles or alligators, to piranhas, to venomous snakes, to even more foul beasts, the swamp can be home to many animals or magical beasts that want to kill and eat visitors.

Plant Monsters

Beware of swamps and bogs that lack animal life, as the vegetation itself could be the killer! Sentient plants, killer vines, poisonous flowers, and more can eliminate the unwary.

Creatures from the Black Lagoon

Critters & Features Found in Swamps



When travelling through the wetlands, it is important to keep adventurers on their toes. And if they stay in one place too long, someone - or thing - will find them.

Use these tables for your hexcrawl, for random encounters, or for inspiration when building out your wetlands ahead of time.

Roll on the Main Encounter table below and then on the relevant table in the appropriate wetland and climate, or relevant article in this issue.

Table: Main Encounters

D6	Encounter
1	Minor feature
2	Major feature
3	Weather Change
4-6	Monster Encounter

Swamps & Marshes

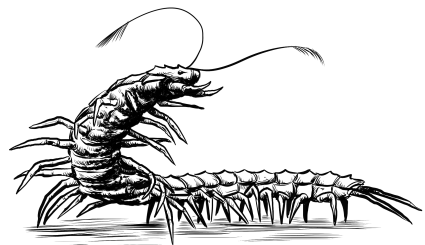
Features, Minor and Major: Use tables found in the article *It Rises From the Soggy Earth* in this issue.

Weather Change: Use the table found in the article *What Doesn't Kill You, Will Make You Stronger* in this issue.

Cold

Table: Encounters in Cold Climates

2D6	Encounter
2	Catoblepas
3	Ooze, Grey
4	Tiger, Dire
5	Ghoul, Swamp*
6	Goblin, Swamp*
7	Giant Boring or Fire Beetle
8	Tiger
9	Will-o'-Wisp
10	Ogre
11	Lycanthrope, Weretiger
12	Hag





Temperate

Table: Encounters in Temperate Climates

2D6	Encounter
2	Hag, Green
3	Chuul
4	Giant, Marsh
5	Fly, Giant
6	Frog, Giant
7	Dragonfly, Giant
8	Stirge
9	Rot Grub
10	Chimaera
11	Medusa
12	Vampiric Mist

Warm

Table: Encounters in Warm Climates

2D6	Encounter
2	Death Knight
3	Muckdweller
4	Shocker Lizard
5	Bullywug
6	Frog, Giant
7	Crocodile, Normal or Dire
8	Lizardfolk
9	Maggot, Giant
10	Manticore
11	Will-o'-Wisp
12	Dragon, Black



Bogs & Fens

Features, Minor and Major: Use tables found in the article *It Rises From the Soggy Earth* in this issue.

Weather Change: Use the table found in the article *What Doesn't Kill You, Will Make You Stronger* in this issue.



Cold

Table: Encounters in Cold Climates

2D6	Encounter
2	Catoblepas
3	Ooze, Grey
4	Tiger, Dire
5	Ghoul, Swamp*
6	Goblin, Swamp*
7	Giant Centipede
8	Tiger
9	Will-o'-Wisp
10	Troll, Swamp* or Ice
11	Lycanthrope, Weretiger
12	Hag

Temperate

Table: Encounters in Temperate Climates

2D6	Encounter
2	Hag, Green
3	Penanggalan
4	Boggard
5	Giant, Marsh
6	Frog, Giant
7	Ogre, Swamp
8	Slug, Giant
9	Will-o'-Wisp
10	Wraith
11	Shambling Mound
12	Dracolisk, Black

* See the article *It Crawled Out* in this issue for the swamp template.



What Doesn't Kill You, Will Make You Stronger Adventuring in Wetlands



Adventures set in wetlands like swamps and marshes can prove troublesome and dangerous.

Travel

Travelling in wetlands is both dangerous and difficult.

Movement

All movements and speeds while in a wetland are quartered. Meaning, someone moving 30-ft per round, would only move 8-ft (can round up to 10-ft).

Overland movement is similarly quartered: if you can normally move 24 miles in a day, then you can only move 6 miles while in a wetland.

See also *Issue 7 of d12 Monthly* for more information on travelling speeds.

Sometimes trails exist in various wetlands, created naturally or by their inhabitants. If there is a trail, movement rates are halved instead. A trail will also allow carts to move through the wetland as well (at half speed).

Tracks

Any non-native moving through wetland will leave tracks that can be easily followed. The tracker gains a +4 bonus to their tracking check.

Exhaustion

If you are using any exhaustion rules, I would apply them while in the wetlands.

You could apply a moderate CON (Fortitude) save for each day travelled, with perhaps a -1 per day already travelled.

This would also apply to any non-native mounts.

Campfires

These tend to be very difficult to almost impossible as any wood in the wetlands is, well, wet; and any wood brought with the travellers soon gets moist due to the climate and amount of water around.

Locations to build fires can also be a problem.

Any fires that are created will be easily visible within the swamp, and may attract unwanted attention from bugs to large predators (make additional random encounter checks).



Combat

Combat can be difficult in wetlands. Movement is restricted or slowed, vegetation can get in the way, visibility from weather or vegetation can be a

hindrance, and fatigue is always an issue, especially in humid environments.

Water

Fighting in water, even if it is knee-deep, can be challenging.

Melee

Anyone standing in water that is knee-deep or higher (which is not too difficult to happen in wetland environments) loses their DEX bonus to AC. Movement is reduced to $\frac{3}{4}$ normal.

Those in waist-high water also receive a -2 penalty to all attacks with weapons that cannot be used underwater. Movement is reduced to $\frac{1}{2}$ normal.

Ranged

Bows and crossbows will need to stay dry as wet bowstrings have a greater chance of breaking. If a bowstring is wet, the attacker will suffer breakage on a natural 1 or 2 on their attack roll.

Fog and mists will affect vision and therefore ranged combat. Maximum range will be based on vision when in a fog (usually only 5-15-ft depending on how thick it is). Otherwise, the archer will be firing as though blind.

Cover and Concealment

There is always cover and concealment within easy reach in the wetlands, whether that's immersing oneself in muck or hiding behind vegetation. The amount of concealment is decided by the GM and various adjustments apply.

Table: Cover and Concealment

Cover or Concealment	Bonus*
Light	+2
Medium	+4
Heavy	+6

* Add bonus to AC, physical saves, and hide check.

Diseases

Diseases are a huge cause of concern when travelling extensively in the wetland areas. Mosquitoes and other bugs and critters carry and spread diseases, and the place itself can cause illness: from mucky water, to poisonous plants, to acrid mists.

See article *What's That On Your Face!?* in this issue for a list of diseases found in wetland areas and their effects.

Weather

Weather can easily work against travellers in wetlands. Fogs and rising mists are a constant issue, as is heavy rainfall in some areas. Use the Random Weather table to quickly determine the day's weather.

Table: Random Weather in Wetlands

D6	Weather
1	Clear
2	Slight Mist
3	Moderate Mist
4	Heavy Fog
5	Light Rain
6	Heavy Rain

It Rises From the Earth

Features Found in Wetlands



Swamps and marshes can be home to many ancient empires (that were perhaps inundated at some past point in history), current humanoid settlements, or hidden temples to dangerous cults.

What follows is a list of features and places you can populate your wetlands with. These can encourage adventurers to brave their depths.

There are minor and major features listed below. Use these, and the tables in the article *Creatures from the Black Lagoon* in this issue, as random encounter tables; or just use them for ideas.



Whirlpool

In pools and streams that crisscross the wetlands, you can find eddies and small whirlpools that can suck down the unwary.

Minor Features

Table: Minor Features in Wetlands

D10	Minor Features
1	Whirlpool
2	Sinkhole
3	Miry Terrain
4	Quickbog
5	Statue
6	Obelisk
7	Ancient Tree
8	Buried Treasure
9	Old Camp
10	Lair

Sinkhole

The ground can collapse at any moment in some areas of the wetlands, becoming a deep, muck-fill hole.

Miry Terrain

Most of the wetlands is boggy and considered difficult terrain, but miry terrain is a showstopper, slowing movement down to 1/10th normal. This makes going around these areas faster than going through them.

Quickbog

The wetland's version of quicksand, a patch of quickbog can drown an unwary traveller rapidly.

Statue

A statue rises up from the muck.

It could be from a long-lost civilization, a local ruin, or perhaps of a famous adventurer or explorer.

Obelisk



A stone obelisk rises up from the marshy ground. This could be merely an ancient symbol, or a magical structure that holds divine or arcane energies.

Ancient Tree

This tree has been here almost as long as the wetlands. It stands as a symbol of perseverance and the strength of nature.

It may be magical in nature, or simply a symbol - religious or not - for the locals.

Buried Treasure

Rumours of buried treasure abound, but very few survive the dangers and harshness of the wetlands to even start looking for it.

This could be a burial ground of an ancient civilization, a lost treasure washed up from

the nearby sea or lake, or a pirate's treasure who found a safe place to bury it, but died soon after.

Old Camp

An old camp lay here discarded and disused.

Perhaps a local uses it sporadically or it belonged to long-dead explorers - whatever the case it may be a good place to make camp... or not!

Lair

This could be an old lair or a current one. If current, roll on the encounter tables in the article *Creatures from the Black Lagoon* in this issue to see what lives here.

Major Features

Table: Major Features in Wetlands

D8	Major Features
1	City Ruins
2	Temple Ruins
3	Idyllic Grove
4	Outcast Human Tribe
5	Evil Temple
6	Ziggurat
7	Humanoid Village
8	Battlefield

Ruins

Ruins dot various wetlands and are exciting places to find both riches and death in abundance.

Ruined City

An ancient city once stood where the wetlands now lay. No-one knows what happened to the city, or its inhabitants, but the ruins are left there to be rediscovered by those brave enough.

Ruined Temple

An old temple once housed cult worshippers, but they, and the god they worshipped, are long dead... or are they?



Idyllic Grove

Nestled in among the twist trees and spiky vines is an ideal grove. Filled with edible flora and small, non-threatening animals, this grove could be a sacred spot for a local druid, a ranger or druid's home, or perhaps just an illusion or oasis to lure the unwary.

Outcast Human Tribe

A human tribe has moved into the wetlands. Perhaps forced to do so, or perhaps they have escaped persecution, or are rebels fighting a corrupt new ruler.

Whatever the case, they may be a hindrance or a boon to the characters.

Barbarian Camp

Whether humans or humanoid, these barbarians call this land home. Or perhaps they have been pushed out of their traditional lands, forced into these wetlands. They may become allies or enemies of the characters.

Evil Temple

Newly built or well-established, this temple is the centre of worship for some evil cult or deity who is too wicked to be worshipped in the open.

This could be a human-based cult, hiding away from civilised lands; or perhaps a humanoid cult of some sort.

Ziggurat or Pyramid

Hidden among the tangle of gnarled trees and vines and moss rises a grand structure that was built by an ancient, or more recent, civilisation.

The ziggurat or pyramid can hold the long-dead or the living kings, but no matter what, they all consist of a mini-dungeon located within their stoney hides.

Humanoid Village

Whether it is lizardfolk, gibberlings, grippli, bullywugs, or other wetlands-dwelling humanoids, they have constructed a village within the tangle of vegetation.

They will protect this with their lives and may be an ally or enemy to the characters.

Battlefield

This could be a recent or a long-ago place of battle. Corpses (animated or not) litter the ground, laying on top of, or half buried in the soggy ground. A feeling of dread comes over all who linger here.



It Crawled Out

New Monster Templates



Templates can be used to spice up a monster, give them a better feel, or to strengthen them.

Swamp Creature

Swamp creatures live in swamps and other wetland environments, and are adapted to those conditions.

Hit Dice: +1 HD

AC: +2 Natural Armour

Movement: See below

Attacks: Can cause disease

Abilities: Con +4

Special Traits:

Ease of Movement: Swamp creatures are not hindered by any movement penalties associated with the wetlands.

Disease Immunity: Swamp creatures are immune to all effects of diseases, but they can still be carriers.

Infect: An attack by a swamp creature can cause disease. The chance per infection is low, but it is a concern over prolonged exposure. Roll percentiles after each time the swamp creature causes damage - if you roll equal to or under the amount of damage, a disease is caught. See the article *What's That On Your Face!?* In this issue for a list of diseases.

Infested

Many animals and beasts are infested with disease, lice, parasites, and other terrible afflictions, but those with the Infest template are extreme examples, easily spotted as their skin, fur, or hair bristles with the infection.

This template can be applied to any animal or beast.

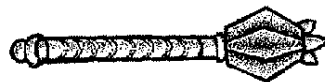
Attacks: Can cause infection

Abilities: Con +4, Cha -4

Special Traits:

Infection: Each attack the infected beast is corrupted and they can pass on this infection. The target must make a moderate CON (Fortitude or Poison) save or succumb to the infection*.

*This can be a particular type the beast has or you can apply the following generic conditions: the target loses D4 CON and CHA, and becomes fatigued. They are ill until cured.



What's That On Your Face!?

New Diseases

Disease is a significant issue in wetland areas. Foetid pools, disease-carrying insects, magical malady - all these and more can bring down even the most stalwart of adventurers.

Catching a Disease

The easiest way to determine this, outside of catching one via a monster, is to make daily saving throws to resist any infections.

At the end of each day have everyone make an easy CON (Fortitude or Poison) saving throw. If they fail then a disease has taken hold (see Disease table in this article).

For each day they spend in the wetlands, the difficulty number increases by 1 and a new check is performed. This means that the longer someone stays within the swamp or bog, the more chance they have to catch some sort of ailment.

List of Diseases

Below is a list of possible diseases someone may catch while in the wetlands, from fairly minor to much more deadly.

The diseases are expanded on below in the following format:

Name: Common name for the disease.

Symptoms: Known manifestations associated with the disease.

Table: Diseases

D10	Disease
1	Red Rash
2	Stiff Bone
3	Night's Curse
4	Foetid Bloat
5	Devil Bones
6	Black Blight
7	Creeping Doom
8	Brain Fog
9	Demon's Bane
10	Dreaded Torpor

Effects: These are the in-game effects of the disease

Course: How long the disease lasts.

Treatment: What difficulty of ability or skill checks that are needed to heal or stave off the disease or its effects. You can also add in any herbal remedies you may use in game.

Red Rash

Symptoms: Nausea, painful rashes, eye irritation

Effects: The victim suffers -1 to all attack checks

Course: Subsides after D4 days if untreated, but scars from rashes may become permanent (save or -1 CHA).

Treatment: Easy

Stiff Bone

Symptoms: Stiffness and soreness in joints

Effects: Victim has a -2 DEX penalty

Course: Abates within a few weeks, but often recurs (annual save or will return)

Treatment: Moderate

Night's Curse

Symptoms: Photophobia, diminished senses

Effects: The victim receives -4 to all perception checks and will avoid light.

Bright light (daylight, daylight spells, etc) causes them pain and they suffer -1 to all attack rolls while in it.

Course: Continuous until healed

Treatment: Easy

Foetid Bloat

Symptoms: Bloating, impaired cognitive abilities, unpleasant smell

Effects: The victim receives -2 INT and emits a foul odour (-2 CHA).

Course: Improves after a few months or until healed

Treatment: Moderate

Devil Bones

Symptoms: Chest pains, swollen joints, muscle weakness, loss of coordination

Effects: The victim receives -4 to DEX & STR

Course: Persists until healed

Treatment: Moderate

Black Blight

Symptoms: Blackened flesh, difficulty breathing, nausea

Effect: The victim receives -4 CHA and -4 CON until healed

Course: Chronic illness that lasts until healed

Treatment: Difficult

Creeping Doom

Symptoms: Muscle spasms, diminished senses, eventual death (in 4 weeks)

Effects: The victim receives -2 to DEX and any perception checks. This worsens by -1 each week until death in 4 weeks.

Course: Continuously worsens until death or treatment

Treatment: Moderate

Brain Fog

Symptoms: Impaired cognitive abilities, hallucinations

Effects: Victim suffers -4 to INT and every time they fail a saving throw, will start to hallucinate, seeing all manner of strange things (this is left up to the GM).

Course: Become permanent unless healed

Treatment: Difficult

Demon's Bane

Symptoms: Bleeding from orifices, loss of hearing

Effects: The victim loses their hearing immediately and then starts to bleed out of the nose and mouth, causing -1 HP per day until healed (HP loss cannot be healed)

Course: Hearing loss is permanent, bleeding stops if healed

Treatment: Difficult

Dreaded Torpor

Symptoms: Fatigue, drowsiness

Effects: The victim is permanently fatigued (either one level or -2 to all physical activities). Need to make a WIS save or fall asleep when on watch.

Course: Permanent until healed

Treatment: Very difficult

Additional Zines



Past zines may help you when travelling through wetlands, and listed below are several issues (all free and available on my website: www.yumdm.com) that have helpful articles.

Issue 7 - Wilderness

This issue is jam-packed with articles that will help traversing the wetlands.

It contains articles on:

- Equipment - carrying capacity and unique bonuses on mundane equipment
- Rules and guides on running travelling sessions and also camping
- Hints on building random encounter tables
- Some simple tracking rules

Issue 2: Death

This issue may come in handy if one of the characters dies while in a swamp. There are articles on:

- Various burial rites
- Taking an injury rather than dying
- Ease the pain of losing a character

Issue 4: Arcane Magic

Two articles in particular are useful in this issue, both dealing with spell components:

- If you are keeping track of spell components, the wetlands are a great place to find them
- Augmenting spells by using special material components

Issue 6: Undead

This issue features some great articles on powering up your undead that lurk in the swamps and mires. Featured articles include:

- Enhancing undead
- Creating new undead
- Teaching old undead new tricks

Issue 10: Monsters

Similar to the undead issue, use these articles to build up your other monsters:

- New monster traits
- Enhanced monsters
- Monsters team up

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