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2300 AD Campaign Book 82 Eridani IV (Texas Rangers), Ylii, and Tour of Known Space

82 Eridani IV - a 2300AD Campaign



Ripper Coast.



The Great Desert.



The Great Desert again.



Two of Kormoran's moons, with ancient Eber ruins in the background.



Eber Dawn.

*yes, the Ebers were scanned from the Ranger sourcebook.

An Overview of the Fauna of the Great Desert

Reid, Alvarez, Hissin. 2305. University of Texas at New Austin, 82 Eridani IV.

Authors' Note

Unless otherwise noted, terms such as "species", "mammals", and "vertebrates" are used in place of "genotype", "mammal-analogs", and "vertebrate-analogs". Use of these terms is for the convenience of the reader and does not denote relationship to the terrestrial Vertebrata and Mammalia. Other than humans and associated domestic terrestrial organisms transported to the two colony sites on Kormoran, the organisms of 82 Eridani IV have no relationship to organisms from Earth.

Taxonomy

With regard to taxonomy of extraterrestrial lifeforms, the International Society of Zoological Nomenclature has adopted the policy that 1) No phylum, class, order, family or genus name can be duplicated; and 2) All binomial names must note parenthetically the planet on which the organism evolved. Use of the Kingdom-level of classification is of questionable utility with regard to both terrestrial and extraterrestrial organisms, and is largely ignored.

With regard to terrestrial organisms genetically modified for life on other planets, the International Society of Zoological Nomenclature has adopted the policy that "+" indicates artificial genetic augmentation; parenthetical names (X/Y) indicate both the original biosphere and that in which the strain developed. Hence, horses genetically modified for life on 82 Eridani IV are identified as "*Equus caballus* + (Sol III/82 Eridani IV)."

Reconciliation of nomenclature and classifications utilized by different intelligent species is unresolvable at this time. The Ebers of 82 Eridani IV do not appear to possess a sophisticated understanding of biological science at this time, and no taxonomy beyond common names for flora and fauna is known. Likewise, nomenclature and classification of radically different biologies (ex. the Phreds of DM + 34 2342/Kimanjano and the modular organisms of Zeta Tucanae/Syuhlahm) are unlikely to be resolved in the foreseeable future.

Basic Terminology

Advanced - most changed from the ancestral condition (ex. a tapeworm is an advanced animal, having changed to such a large degree that most organ systems have been lost).

Analog/analogous - similar in form, but of independent origin; the result of convergent evolution.

Common Name - the non-scientific name of an organism (ex. On Sol III, *Nerodia harterii* is known by the common name of "Brazos water snake" and *Cynomys ludovicianus* is known as "prairie dog." In the case of *Cynomys* sp., the prairie dog is not a dog - rather it is a member of the Sciuridae (squirrels), demonstrating that common names can be misleading).

Convergent Evolution - independent evolution of similar organs and forms (ex. limbs, eyes, wings, aquatic streamlining, etc.) as biological "solutions" to similar environmental challenges. Terrestrial examples include winged flight (birds, bats, pterosaurs) and focusing eyes (vertebrata, cephalopoda). Extraterrestrial examples include swimming forms (Earth dolphins and 82 Eridani IV sea dragons) and trunks (Earth elephants and E-horses). Convergent evolution demonstrates that evolution is guided by environment as much as by genetic heritage.

Genotype - the genetic information of a specific population.

Phenotype - the physical expression of genes (ex. Earth dogs have one genotype, but several phenotypes known as "breeds").

Primitive - least changed from the ancestral condition (ex. a human is a primitive mammal, having five nonspecialized digits at the end of each limb, collar bones, and nonspecialized teeth).

Species - a population that does not interbreed with related populations under normal environmental conditions (ex. eastern packrats and south plains packrats of Sol III can mate and produce fertile offspring, but do not normally do so in the wild). This classification is somewhat problematic (ex. wolves and dogs of Sol III are behaviorally distinct, but can and do interbreed in the wild) and remains a point of contention among organismal biologists.

Taxonomy - the process of classifying and naming organisms. Current taxonomy is based on the work of Carl von Linné, a scientist and naturalist of 18th Century Sol III.

Biodiversity of 82 Eridani IV

Biodiversity is somewhat limited in higher vertebrates. This may be a direct result of the war fought between Eber cultures on 82 Eridani IV (Kormoran), Beta Hydri II (Daikoku), and Rho Eridani II (Heidelsheimat) several thousand years ago. The apparent use of thermonuclear weapons at several sites on Kormoran, and the associated release of radioactive fallout, has allowed an increase in the natural mutation rate. The result of this is an ecosystem in a state of flux, with unoccupied niches and a rapid diversification of organisms that have the potential to fill them. An alternate theory is that introduction of "Eber-oid" organisms destabilized the native ecosystem of 82 Eridani IV and resulted in a wave of extinctions between 7000 \pm 4000 years ago.

As noted in previous studies, all known terrestrial vertebrates are homothermic (warm-blooded) as are many marine and aquatic vertebrates. This indicates that homothermy likely originated in the sea before the spread of vertebrates to land.

There were two main divisions of vertebrate analogs on Kormoran at the time of its discovery:

1. Hexapods with well-developed cephalization (hulks, grunt bugglies, curtain dragons, etc.). Fossil evidence suggests these organisms evolved from decapods (ten-limbed organisms), with the first and second pairs of limbs evolving over time into jaws and hearing organs.
2. Quadrupeds with rudimentary cephalization (Ebers, E-dogs, E-horses, etc.). This category of vertebrate is not known from the fossil record. Of the two divisions of terrestrial vertebrates, Ebers, E-dogs, E-horses and a few related species make up only a fraction of total vertebrate species on Kormoran.

At least three studies conducted by New Austin and Yasser exobiologists have demonstrated that these two divisions are quite different both biochemically and genetically. This has led to speculation that either: 1) evolution of homothermic vertebrates on Kormoran occurred at least twice from completely unrelated species; or 2) one of the two divisions of vertebrates on Kormoran was introduced to the planet.

The lack of "Eber-oid" remains in the fossil record of 82 Eridani IV, and Eber ruins on Daikoku and Heidelshemat give strong support to the theory that "Eber-oids" did not evolve on Kormoran. Both divisions of fauna utilize nucleic acid analogs for transmission of genetic information, but cellular structures including chromosomal- equivalents is radically different. For example, "Eber-oid" lifeforms utilize cellular structures similar to mitochondria for energy production and have oval chromosome-analogs, while the hexapodal fauna energy production appears to be integral to each cell and is not carried out in separate mitochondrial bodies. Chromosomal-analogs for the hexapods of Kormoran have a characteristic "star" shape. This evidence supports the theory that Ebers and related lifeforms are not indigenous to 82 Eridani IV. The ultimate origin of the Ebers is currently unknown, as linguistic and cultural differences make communication of such concepts difficult to convey. This topic will be covered in a forthcoming paper from the UTNA Department of Xenoarchaeology.

Establishment of human colonies on 82 Eridani IV by the UAR and Texas introduced a third ecosystem to Kormoran. The impact of a terrestrial ecology on the already destabilized ecology of 82 Eridani IV is the subject of intense research and monitoring. Recent arrival and settlement of at least two groups of Sung and several individual Xiang by the Chinese Colonial Administration and the Communion of Sentients Church can be expected to further complicate the ecology of 82 Eridani IV, especially the introduction and cultivation of Xiang dirtmothers. The long term effects of comingling five independently-evolved ecosystems cannot be anticipated and warrants further study.

Illegally Imported Terran Organisms

At various times in the history of human settlement on Kormoran, incidents of the illegal import and/or release of terrestrial animals has occurred. Of particular note, nine-banded armadillos, kit foxes and kangaroo rats smuggled onto Kormoran as zygotes or genetic sequences have managed to survive and breed in number after adult specimens were released into the wild. Uncontrolled and unmonitored reproduction of these species could have disastrous long-term impact on the native ecosystem of 82 Eridani IV.

Classification Scheme of Fauna of 82 Eridani IV at the time of Terran Settlement

Phylum Bichordata (bifurcate lower spine)

Class Hexapodophera (homothermic, hexapodal)

Order Theratia (hunters)

Family Pingarctidae (hulks)

Family Pseudovulpidae (tall foxes)

Order Herbaphaga (grazers)

Family Centauridae (centaurs)

Family Velocidae (sand runners)

Order Pipria

Family Pipridae (tappers)

Order Pterifer

Family Alapodidae (cotta birds)

Order Pseudocetus

Family Hydaserpentidae (sea dragons)

Family Velucetidae (curtain dragons)

Order Jaculatoria ("grunt bugglies")

Family (communal and herbivorous gruntbuggies)

Family (omnivorous and predatory gruntbuggies)

Phylum Acephalata

Class Proboscophera (trunk-bearers)

Order Eberiformes (well-developed trunks, well-developed eye stalks)

Family Eberidae (Ebers)

Order Pseudungulata (well-developed trunks, reduced eye stalks, herbivorous)

Family Bucinatidae (E-horses)

Order Pseudocarnivora (reduced trunks, reduced eye stalks, carnivorous and omnivorous)

Family Cantatoridae (E-dogs)

Phylum Chordata

Class Mammalia

Order Primata

Family Hominidae (humans)

Family Pongidae (chimpanzees)

Order Perissodactyla

Family Equidae (horses, burros)

Order Artiodactyla

Family Bovidae (cattle)

Family Camelidae (camels, llamas)

Family Capridae (sheep, goats)

Order Carnivora

Family Canidae (dogs, kit foxes**)

Family Felidae (cats)

Order Rodentia

Family Muridae (rats and mice*)

Family Heteromyidae (kangaroo rats**)

Order Xenarthra

Family Dasypodidae (nine-banded armadillos**)

Class Aves

Order Galliformes

Family Phasianidae (chickens)

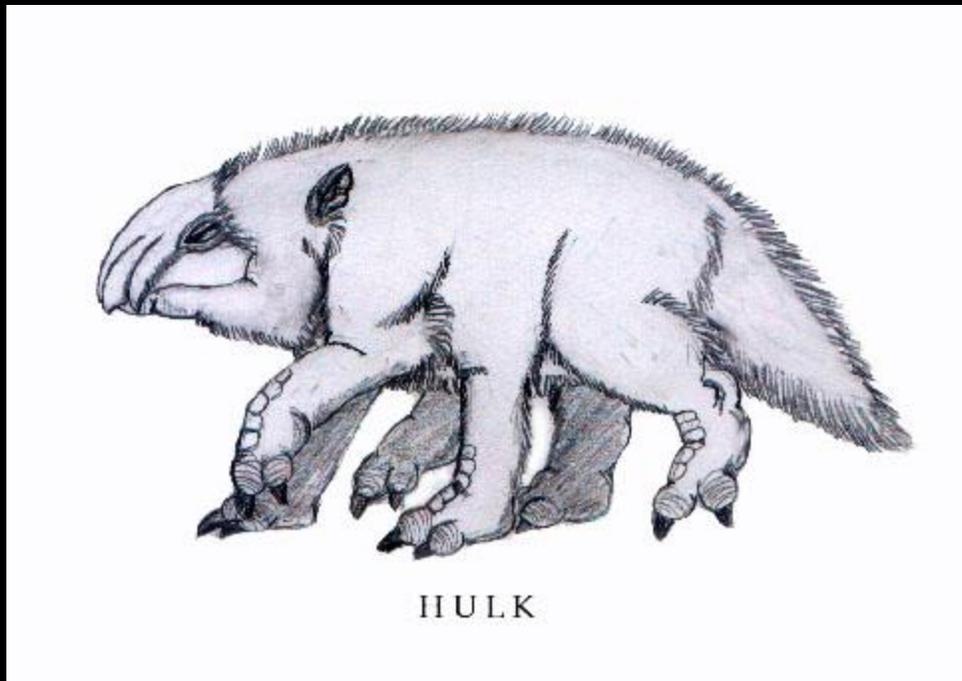
Phylum Annelida (earthworms)

Phylum Arthropoda* (insects - cockroaches, gnats, houseflies)

* inadvertently introduced to Kormoran and native ecosystem

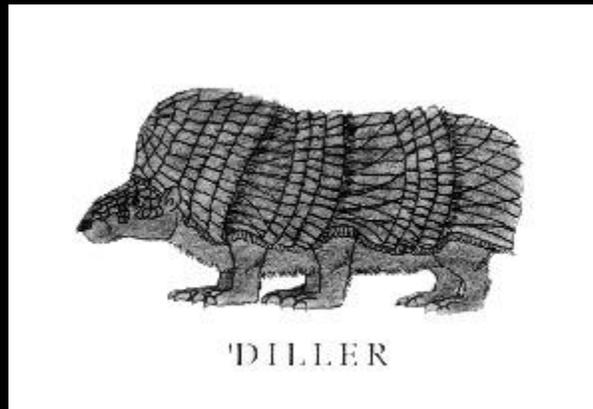
**illegally introduced to Kormoran and released into the native ecosystem

Common or Noteworthy Fauna of 82 Eridani IV



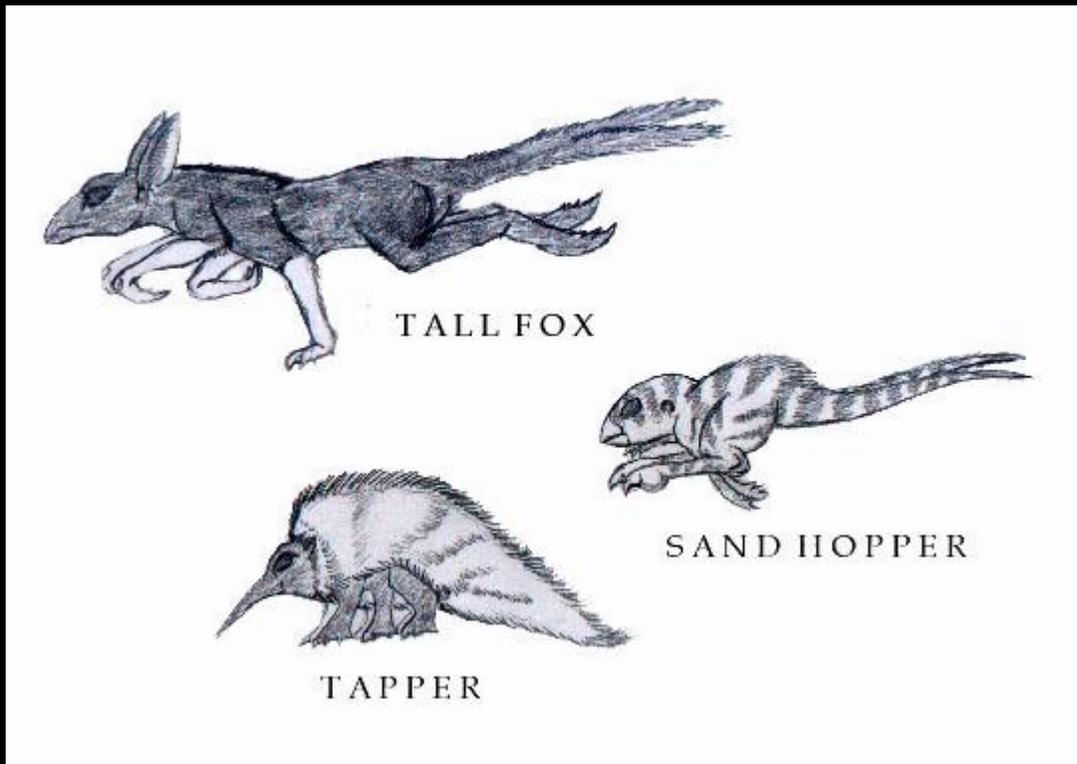
Hulk/Armatoste

Pingarctos therates (82 Eridani IV) - The hulk and the closely related desert hulk (*P. gracilis*) represent primitive forms of Kormoran mammals. Utilizing all six limbs for locomotion limits the speed of the hulk and related species. Hulks can utilize their first pair of limbs as tools for combat and grasping prey, but they must revert to a hexapodal gait in order to move at top efficiency. Locomotion in hulks is a trot with three limbs in contact with the ground at any given time. Hulk movement is a loping, spraddled trot described as "camel-like" or "insect-like". To compensate for a relative lack of forward speed, hulk limbs are short and thick to allow for rapid acceleration to top speed in a matter of seconds.



'Diller/Armadito

Duradermifer fossor (82 Eridani IV) - the name 'diller is derived from the vernacular for *armadillo*, an armored edentate mammal common to Texas and Mexico on Sol III. The 'diller digs elaborate descending corkscrew burrows to collect rainwater and dew and to access the local water table. Excess water is stored in an organ called an *aquifer*. A 'diller with a saturated aquifer can survive without free water for several weeks. The armored dermis of the 'diller is believed to have evolved to limit moisture loss through the skin rather than as a defense against predators. Specialized glands, abundant both on the 'diller's skin and its shell, produce a waterproofing oil as an additional means of preventing water loss. Buildup of this oil on the 'diller, however, can cause matting of the fur and subsequent loss of water. As a result, 'dillers must periodically "bathe" in sand to remove excessive oil. So-called "'diller wallers", dust-filled depressions (wallows) used for sand bathing, are a common site in the Great Desert, and present a hazard to a careless hiker or horse that can sometimes result in a sprained or broken ankle. 'Dillers are omnivorous, eating a variety of tubers, roots, vegetation and small animals. As such, they are a common agricultural pest in the area around New Austin.



The Tall Fox, Tapper and Sand Hopper are representative of small to medium mammals found in the Great Desert.

Sand Hoppers/Saliititos de medianos

(Family: Velocidae) Sand Hoppers of various sizes exist, and occupy niches similar to those occupied by lagomorphs and cervids on Earth. The typical phenomorph consists of the first pair of limbs reduced in size and used in food gathering and grooming, the second pair of limbs utilized for balance and locomotion, and the third pair of limbs utilized as the primary energizers for locomotion. Related species found in the coastal areas of Kormoran are similar in form.

Tappers/Carpinteros

(Family: Pipridae) Tappers are Kormoran-analogs of terrestrial organisms such as kiwis, woodpeckers and aardvarks. Small and relatively slow-moving, tappers have evolved highly modified "beaks" to allow them to feed on smaller burrowing animals (insect- and annelid-analogs). Each genotype of tapper fills a distinct niche and has an equally distinct "beak" depending on its prey. The "beak" can be rigid and used to bore holes in trees while another can be relatively flexible and used to probe nooks and crannies in rocks. At least one species has a "beak" that can be extended and retracted suddenly for use as a harpoon to spear prey.

Tall Fox/Zorro alto

Ativulpes velox (82 Eridani IV) - see Ranger Sourcebook. The Tall Fox fills roughly the same ecological niche as the terrestrial jackal. A related species, the

Centaur/Centauro

Centauroides spp. (82 Eridani IV)- see Ranger Sourcebook.

Cotta Bird/Capote

- see Ranger Sourcebook.

Cormorant/Cormorán

- see Ranger Sourcebook.

Sea Dragon/Dragón del Mar

Dracon marinus (82 Eridani IV) - see Ranger Sourcebook.

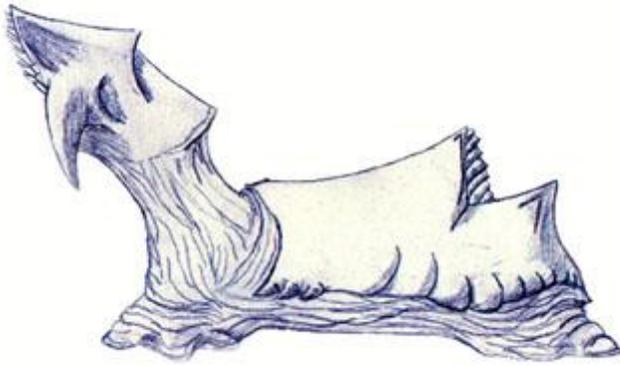
Curtain Dragon/Dragón de cortina

Pseudocetus velumifer (82 Eridani IV) - see Ranger Sourcebook.

Gruntbugglies/Gruñidos

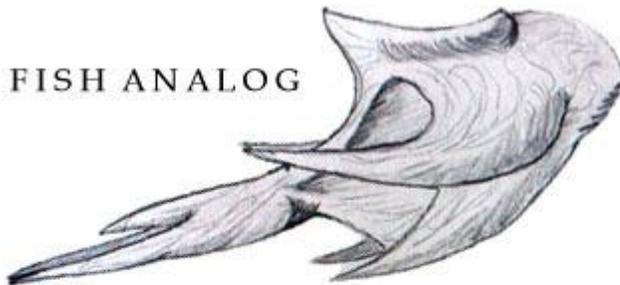
- see Ranger Sourcebook.

- Communal Gruntbugglies
- Sharpshooter
- Omnivore
- Sniper
- Great Sniper

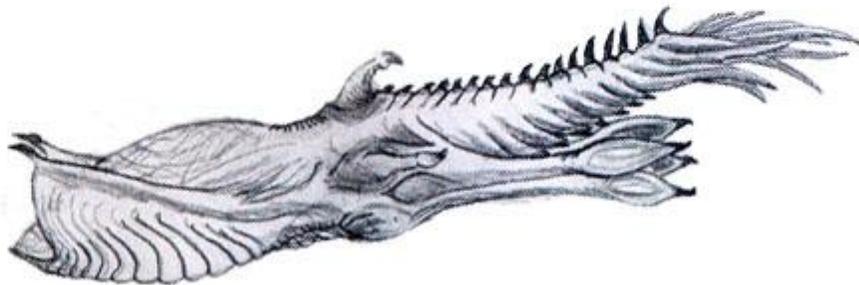


DESERT SLUG

Land-dwelling, aquatic, and marine forms.



FISH ANALOG



SQUID ANALOG

Marine life is varied and abundant off the southern coast of Kormoran.

Eber/Ebero

Tibicen sapiens (82 Eridani IV) - see Ranger Sourcebook.



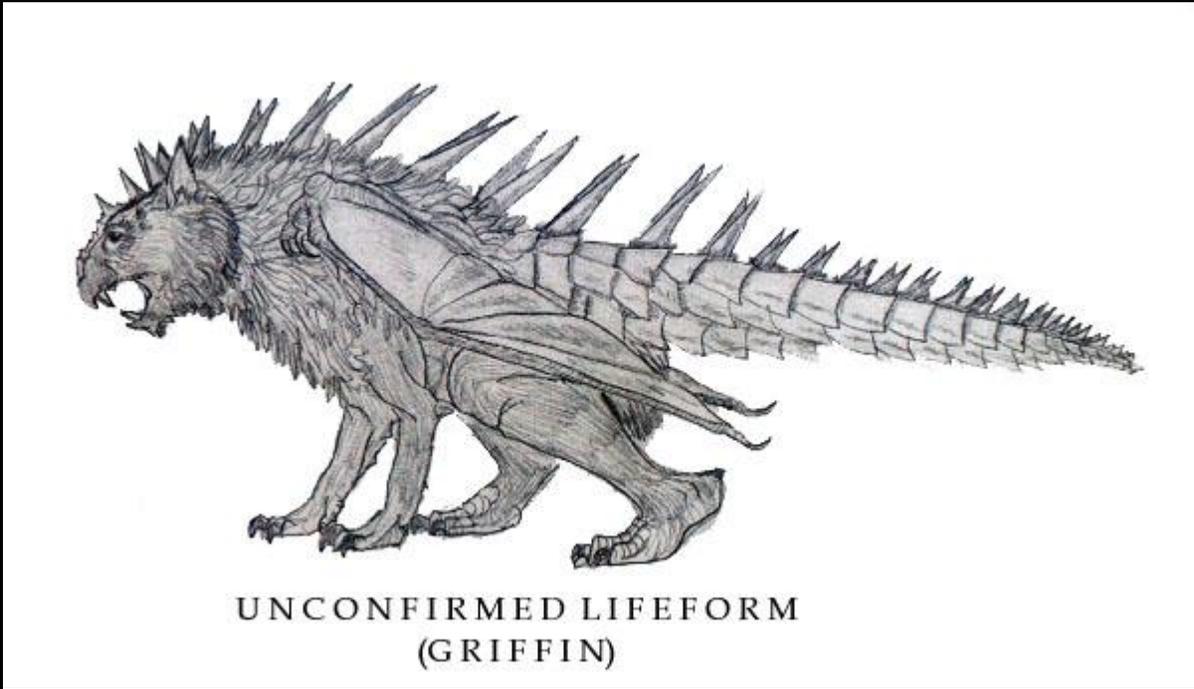
E-dog/Perro de Ebero

Cantator pseudocanis (82 Eridani IV) E-dogs (derived from "Eber-dogs") have been demonstrated to be chemically and genetically related to the Ebers and E-horses of Kormoran. As with all organisms of this biological lineage, the structure of the cranium is rudimentary and not clearly differentiated from the "pectoral" girdle. As with Ebers and E-horses, E-dogs possess quadruple jaws in the upper torso, and forelimbs noticeably longer than hindlimbs. Because of this, E-dogs have a hunting style that is found in no other terrestrial carnivore on Kormoran - the ossified cranial plate is utilized as a battering ram. E-dogs typically rush their prey from short range, relying on the cranial plate, mass and speed to knock their prey from its feet. Once the prey organism is pummeled to the ground, E-dogs utilize their well-developed claws to induce lethal wounds. The eye stalks are extended until just prior to impact with their prey at which point they are retracted under the protection of the cranial plate rim. E-dogs have no structure analogous to a neck, so domestic E-dogs are leashed using a harness or a ring set into the edge of the cranial plate. The proboscis of E-dogs are reduced compared to Ebers and E-horses, but the E-dogs still possess a wide range of vocalizations. Using chambers on the underside of the cranial plate as resonance chambers, E-dogs are able to produce calls that carry for miles across the open desert. These sounds usually described as sounding like notes produced by a bassoon, a didjereedoo, and/or a bagpipe.

Civilized Ebers have bred several distinct strains of E-dogs that are utilized for various purposes, including hunting, warfare, decoration and food. Nomadic Ebers of the Great Desert do not breed E-dogs for specific traits - E-dogs domesticated by Nomadic Ebers are indistinguishable from feral E-dogs. This indicates that the wild-type (unmodified) phenotype is similar to E-dogs possessed by Nomadic Ebers.

E-Horse/Caballos de Eberos

Bucinator pseudoequus (82 Eridani IV) - see Ranger Sourcebook.



The illustration above is based on eyewitness testimony. Known as a griffin, this unconfirmed lifeform is noted as being hexapodal and may in fact be an unknown form of Kormoran avian similar to the cotta bird. Many features of this organism, however, do not conform to typical Kormoran morphologies, notably the structures of the cranium (prominent nares, orientation of the jaw, teeth, muzzle, eye structure, etc.). The New Austin exobiology staff dismiss reports of this organism as being hoaxes, misidentified Kormoran avians, or hallucinations induced by the extreme climate of the Great Desert.

Lesser-known organisms:

Acephalata

- Skunk Apes
- Gollums

Hexapodata

- hodag
- el chupacabra
- 'roos
- milamo/thundercrane
- thunderbird
- canteen fish
- furry fish
- 'gator
- sand cat
- silver cat
- flying fish

NOTE: CAMPAIGN IDEAS AND SETTINGS ON THIS PAGE MAY NOT REFLECT THE "ORTHODOX" 2300AD UNIVERSE.

SPOILER WARNING!!! AT LEAST ONE RANGER SOURCEBOOK SECRET IS REVEALED HEREIN!!!

82 Eridani IV Campaign Ideas

The entire campaign on 82 Eridani IV is best handled (in my never humble opinion) as a traditional "Old West" setting, assuming the players take the roles of members of the Texas enclave of New Austin. Any setting with Texas Rangers (no, not the baseball team) is just crying out for any and all Old West cliches.

Some basic plot ideas and elements of an Old West flavor would be:

- 1) Cowboys and Indians (aka Humans and Ebers - whether the two groups cooperate or fight is up to you)
- 2) the Iron Horse (Black Sky Railroad) - I had a group of Nomadic Ebers tell a group of PCs of a fearsome beastie - the name translated as "black dragon" as the Ebers described a terrible, hug creature that breathed smoke and fire (a bit of an exaggeration, but the Eber needed to explain why the beastie had scared them so!)...
- 3) Outlaws and Banditos (the population of New Austin is sufficient to support quite a few chronic malcontents - I recommend something like "Wayland Boggs and the McLowry Brothers" knocking over the databank...).
- 4) Buffalo (E-horse and Centaur) stampedes
- 5) Cattle drives (whether of cattle, sheep, E-horses, or Centaurs)
- 6) Wagon trains (settlement of new areas of the Great Desert, or convoys of vehicles travelling together for mutual protection from potentially hostile Nomadic Ebers)
- 7) the new School Marm has landed at the UAR spaceport. Somebody's gotta go pick her up and bring her back to New Austin...
- 8) Cattle rustlers and land barons...
- 9) There should be at least one or two crusty old prospectors out in the hinterlands/BFE/wherever with his or her trusty mule or E-horse. "Stinky Pete" is a fixture in my own campaign - Stinky likes to sing more often than he likes to practice any sort of personal hygiene, but he is terrible at both endeavors. His arrival is usually announced by (singing loud and off-key):

"...Oh, I've got a gal and she's the only gal for me! She's the hog-callin' champion of the state of Tennessee!

Whoopie-tie-yi-yippi-yippi-yo-yippi-yea! Whoopie-tie-yi-yippi-yippi-yea!

...Then one day she ran away! Only seen 'er once since!

She was kissin' her new sweetheart through a barbed wire fence!

Whoopie-tie-yi-yippi-yippi-yo-yippi-yea! Whoopie-tie-yi-yippi-yippi-yea!"

etc. etc. yadda yadda

- 10) **Learn some Español** - Texas in 2300AD is bilingual. This should be reflected in place names, surnames, etc. I'd recommend that *at least* 3/4 of the NPCs encountered by the player characters should have Spanish surnames. This

should also be reflected in cultural norms - siestas, the importance of music, machismo, devotion to family, hard working, colorful celebrations, etc. "Pure" Anglos are a minority subculture in 2300AD Texas (aka, there ain't many folks named Jones in New Austin). Remember to throw in the occasional Dia de los Muertos and Cinco de Mayo festivals. This'll also make it easier for the overabundance of French soldier/mercenary PCs to fit in, as Spanish and French are vaguely mutually comprehensible.

Non-Old West elements:

1) Cooperation between UAR and Texas scientists continues despite minor conflicts between their respective enclaves. This could result in a great "Who Dunit" game set amidst Eber ruins when a famous scientist turns up dead... was it a jealous colleague? was it another foul plot by radicals? or maybe an ancient Eber combat robot that is still functional? Heheheh...

2) KAFERS??? Rumors abound when a strange carapaced creature starts raiding chicken coops on the outskirts of New Austin. Maybe it IS a Kafer scout(s)...or maybe a previously uncataloged animaloid...or maybe the CommSent Church lost track of one of its Xiang members again...

3) Yeah, there are Sung and Xiang on 82 Eridani IV in my 2300AD campaign. There are two main groups - Sung exobiologists studying Ebers and Sung CommSent Church members (definitely the minority of Sung on 82 Eridani IV). The Xiang? They just tagged along. Some of them brought Dirt Mothers seeds along just in case they decide to stay...

4) Chinese/UAR/Texas/Eber expedition to Zeta Reticuli? (see 1 above for a twist - Murder on the Orient Express could take on a whole new meaning...).

5) Space Pirates looking for supplies. I recommend a pirate captain named Jean-Luc Ricardo or something equally trite. The one time I used this, the pirates were looking for "Commander Data" (translation: data on the command structure of the Chinese interdiction fleet and the UAR and Texas enclaves - the pirates didn't speak Texican very well)...

6) Rock-N-Roll! The interactions between human musicians and Ebers are described in the Ranger sourcebook. A big name musician from Earth may need some helpful input and assistance from locals when he/she shows up to gain artistic insight from the Ebers (even if the scenario only involves keeping the Ebers from doing the well-meaning musician in)...

7) Romeo and Yafnina/Hassan and Juliet - tragedy abounds, especially if one of the amorous young people is the child of one of the player characters.

8) Eber sabotage of human research efforts - according to the 2300AD Director's Guide, the Ebers do NOT like to talk about their ~real~ homeworld. How far they would go to protect/hide this information is up to the referee. Despite the "big secret" of the Ranger sourcebook, its pretty obvious to anyone with a little background in biology that Ebers are not indiginous to 82 Eridani IV.

If your players would rather take roles as members of the UAR enclave, then assume the Texans are like Mongolians in the era of Genghis Khan - very dangerous and sure to stop by soon to burn your house down...

In the aftermath of the scenario described in the Ranger sourcebook, several short- and long-term ramifications become apparent.

1. *Increased hostilities between UAR and Texan citizens.*

In my 2300AD campaign, every able bodied Texan must serve at least two years in either the militia or a related field (combat engineering, communications, medicine, etc.). This allows Texas to field an "army" in much the same manner

as the modern nation of Israel - a relatively small regular army (the Department of Public Safety) and a much larger militia composed of a majority of the citizenry. Weapon ownership is largely unrestricted with the exception of heavy weapons and explosives. Ownership and maintenance of personal military weaponry is, in fact, required by law in 2300AD Texas.

Of the two human enclaves, the UAR are the more "civilized." Unrestricted access to those imports allowed by Chinese colonial forces results in a wider access to arts, sciences, technology, and communications by the UAR. The Texans, on the other hand, tend to be more reactionary and prone to outright violence (in my 2300AD campaign, the "UAR" plot to force the Texans into a military confrontation with the Nomadic Ebers was **not** endorsed or even known of by the UAR colonial government - it was the action of a few misguided and short-sighted radical elements of the UAR enclave).

Fortunately, the geographical separation of the UAR and Texas enclaves has served to limit hostility - it takes at least two weeks' overland travel to reach one enclave from the other. On the other hand, radicals, fanatics, racists and anarchists are more than willing to make the trip.

Increasingly frequent "incidences" of attacks on outlying homes and facilities are being conducted by radical elements of both sides against the other. This is forcing each government to consider options for a solution. Unfortunately, input from each enclaves' Terran government is infrequent and sporadic due to the interdiction of non-Chinese/Manchurian shipping by the Chinese fleet.

2. Chinese response to UAR/Texas conflict on 82 Eridani IV.

If the level and frequency of violence continues to escalate, the current garrison of "Colonial Administration Cultural Observers" (translation: Chinese Army Occupation Forces) on 82 Eridani IV may be increased in number and resupplied with heavier weaponry and transport.

In the event that the Chinese government places military peacekeepers in either the UAR enclaves, the Texas enclave, or both enclaves, the possibility of outright violence against Chinese forces by the two enclaves increases drastically. Each enclave, despite the redundantly worded treaties with the local Ebers, sees the land they occupy as "their property" (yes, both enclaves are not inclined to see their leases as leases). This is reinforced by the technological advantage humanity currently holds over the Ebers of 82 Eridani IV.

3. Eber response to UAR/Texas conflict on 82 Eridani IV

It is possible that both the Civilized Ebers will become irritated and/or fearful of continued hostility between the UAR and Texas enclaves. In this event, the Eber nations could conceive of "evicting" their Terran tenants.

Shorter Scenarios:

- Eber nomads run across a little boy playing a penny whistle. To the Ebers, the melody sounds like profound philosophical statements, so they "invite" the little boy to accompany them to their lands to meet their elders. The colonists think the Eber kidnapped the boy for some nefarious purpose..
- Curtain Dragons - First Contact (more on this later!).
- Archaeological dig - remains of Eber spacecraft/shuttlecraft. Also discovery of ancient Eber nuclear weapon stockpile.

Recommended Character Types

1. Colonists/Settlers
2. Prospectors, Trappers or Mountain Men
3. No more than one Texas Ranger or DPS Trooper per gaming group - if anyone else wants a cop, they can be deputized...

4. No more than one Contact Specialist per group (there are only three in the entirety of New Austin!)
5. Embittered former soldier (keep these to a minimum)
6. Government Agricultural Inspector (only one in New Austin)
7. Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife field agents/troubleshooters (only two in New Austin)
8. Graduate students in exo-archaeology
9. Greasemonkey or Waterwell Engineer

As can be seen, we've had the most fun (on and off for about ten years now) by playing characters that are not commandos or mercenaries. Try it - you'll like it! There's more to 2300AD than killin' Kafers!

How to get around on 82 Eridani IV

1. Horses and Neohorses
 2. Camels and Neocamels
 3. E-horses
 4. Dirtbike
 5. Dunebuggy
 6. Hovercraft
 7. Ultralight/gyrocopter
 8. Off-road vehicles (many are scratchbuilt from spare parts - think of *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*)
-

Rules Changes and Modifications

1. Biotechnology - cut off from many imports by their UAR neighbors, the Texas enclave relies more and more often on biotechnology as a solution to survival and growth problems. DNA modification of humans and nonhumans is fairly common in immigrant Texans. Texans born on 83 Eridani IV in the last thirty years have all been altered to one degree or another. Common modifications are:

- 1) increased kidney efficiency to reduce water requirements;
- 2) alteration of eyes to compensate for the difference in luminosity between Sol and 82 Eridani and to mitigate corneal damage from sand storms;
- 3) alteration of respiratory system to allow more efficiency filtering of dust and sand;

Nonhuman modifications

1) Neohorses and Neocamels- horses and camels have been modified as described above for humans. Additional modifications include larger build and stronger bones for more efficient transport of people and goods in the higher gravity of 82 Eridani IV.

2) Neodogs - dogs have been modified as described above for humans. Additional modifications include an increase in glial cell concentration for "smarter" dogs. These animals assist in agriculture, search and rescue missions, guard duty, etc.

3) Neochimps (hypothetical) - no data available at this time. The presence of Chimpanzees on 82 Eridani IV is not widely known within the Texas enclave, let alone outside of it.

Other Terrestrial Lifeforms

The settlers in the UAR and Texas enclaves brought with them genomic patterns for hundreds of thousands of terrestrial organisms from bacteria to animals. As it was unknown at the time whether or not terrestrial plants could survive without associated symbiotic terrestrial animals, bacteria and fungi, the capability to reproduce in limited form any terrestrial ecosystem was considered essential for longterm survival. The Ebers were not told of this, or if it was mentioned they had no understanding of the potential implications for their own survival.

For the record, terrestrial plants can survive with few terrestrial symbionts. Bacterial and fungal analogs native to 82 Eridani IV fill the remaining symbiotic niches. This is due to chemical similarities between terrestrial life and lifeforms present on 82 Eridani IV at the time of human arrival.

Scientific Research on 82 Eridani IV

Both the UAR and Texas enclaves carry out a variety of scientific research projects, primarily in exobiology, exoarchaeology, exopaleontology and sapientology. Exobiology is required to monitor the interactions of terrestrial and Kormoran ecologies, and exoarchaeology and sapientology are necessary to maximize constructive interactions with the native Ebers.

Paleontological research is regarded as being of limited value for short term human survival, and is primarily conducted by automomous robots. These robots possess limited AI intellects that allow them to seek out fossil-bearing strata and to excavate and catalog fossil remains of organims from 82 Eridani IV. Information obtained by these robots is then made available to their respective enclaves for "leisure" research.

Technology Changes from Orthodox 2300AD Campaigns

Presence of nanotechnology (very likely by 2300 AD - hell, very likely by 2100 AD). This is manifested most often in the following ways:

- 1) boosted immune systems (increased resistance to toxins, infections, etc.).
- 2) higher rate of tissue recovery and healing (healing rates can be increased as long as water and food are available to power the operation).
- 3) Smart Dust (nanotech communication nets, observation drones, etc.).
- 4) Construction and Material Science (stronger walls, houses that build themselves, machines capable of self-repair or directed modification, etc.).

Note that nanotechnology is tightly controlled to prevent "mutations" in the code that controlls and defines functions for each type of nano-device.

Computer and Communication Technology

Computers in 2300AD bear very little resemblance to computers of the 20th and early 21st centuries. The computers brought by humans to Kormoran more closely resemble biological nervous systems and brains than their distant electronic ancestors, and are capable of various degrees of "intelligence." True Artificial intelligence has not been pursued for at least two hundred years. "Simulated Intelligence" is considered more practical, but SI itself exists only a replacement to the archaic GUI interfaces of the early Electronic Age. Computers are seen as fundamental tools in much the same way that 20th century humanity perceived paper and pens.

Likewise, the concept of "Cyberpunk" (physically connecting oneself to a machine) is seen as a quaint old belief along with Santa Claus and witchcraft. Circuitry is inserted into human beings (actually, precursor materials are injected and

these materials are then assembled into requisite circuitry and transmitters via nanotechnology), and each new "device" can only be used after much practice. For example, a "switch" installed in the musculature of a human will eventually allow them to send and receive signals from computers via 24th century wireless technology. This allows immediate utilization of machinery and computers.

Advanced learning techniques (memes, injections of pm-RNA sequences, etc.) make physically inserting a "skill chip" obsolete (actually, skill chips were never developed). Instead, memories and knowledge can be installed through means that are noninvasive physically. Information imparted in this way can be accessed through practice, but associated physical aspects of this knowledge must be learned. This means that while the maneuvers of every form of martial arts could be installed in a person's memory, the ability to physically carry out these moves has to be learned.

Human reflexes can be modified to some degree, as can sensory input, through nanotechnological and microsurgery techniques. These techniques do not always yield the expected results, however - human beings evolved their minds and bodies over millions of years. Changes to the human body, especially the nervous system, run the risk of resulting in "problems" such as schizophrenia, obsessive/compulsive disorders, hallucinations, hysterical blindness and stress-induced catatonia. These drawbacks can be overcome with training and therapy.

Back on Sol III, more extensive modifications are available, and are nondamaging to the humans there. This is mainly because the humans on Sol III really aren't quite human anymore. Genomic and cybernetic alterations to large segments of the population have resulted in humanity reaching the brink of Singularity. Singularity was first conceptualized in the 20th century, and is defined as the point at which humanity would change or be changed to a degree as to be unimaginable or unrecognizable. The closer one gets to Sol III the more apparent these changes become. Backwater worlds like 82 Eridani IV, quite frankly, are populated by primitive (archaic) humans.

Physics and Other Scary Things

Antimatter is old news. Sustainable fusion reactions are ancient history. Manipulation of the Higgs Field to induce folding of space is well-understood. This allows faster-than-light space travel, but also means that "true" warfare has become unimaginably destructive. Space folding allows weapons to be delivered to their targets with no warning. Folding space around a target in a chaotic manner results in the destruction of virtually anything. Accelerating a 1963 Buick LeSabre to 99% C (lightspeed) with an antimatter drive and aiming it at a planet will result in the destruction of any carbon-based biology on the surface of that planet (Kafer problem? What Kafer problem?). Fortunately for the UAR and Texas enclaves on Kormoran, this technology is not available for use in local "tribal" warfare.

Recommended Resources, Concepts and Ideas:

When Gravity Fails - Arabian Cyberpunk (novels by George Alec Effinger; Cyberpunk RPG sourcebook by R. Talsorian Games, Inc.).

Obligatory Disclaimer and Tirade: Some of the elements of *When Gravity Fails* may be offensive to some folks (if you're culturally or religiously narrow minded enough to look through a keyhole with both eyes, for example). So don't read 'em if "adult" themes bother you.

GURPS Ultratech I and II sourcebooks.

Tejano folk/pop and Honkeytonk music.

Peruvian flute music - after all, Texas and Peru maintain close and friendly ties in 2300AD, plus it just sounds pretty cool. REMEMBER: EXPAND YOUR CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE AND HORIZONS!

Read up on Mexican history! Mexican history takes a very different view of the war for Texas Independence back in 1830, the Mexican-American War, etc. This should be reflected in a Texas-oriented 2300AD campaign.

But read up on the Old West too - its mostly B***S***, but its still a lot of fun.

Use MIDI files to simulate Eber speech in your campaigns. If you have access to this document, you can probably find a freeware MIDI-making program is one isn't already installed on your computer.

Other Campaign Notes:

I don't tend to rely on rules and numbers when roleplaying - the story is more important to everyone's enjoyment than the dice and tables are. As a result, I don't define things (like GURPS tech levels). What works, works. A professional background in biotech also skews my perspective - For example, nanotechnology is a much more likely invention than hand-held combat laser weapons.

Personally, I use a set of rules that utilizes one page of text and a single d6:

FREWARE RPG RULES

See copyright information on my [main webpage](#) .

Game Mechanics:

Attributes: Roll d6 six times, discard lowest roll, and arrange as desired, or distribute 15 points between Fitness, Agility, Knowledge, Courage, and Resources.

Fitness = Strength, endurance, health, etc. Agility = Speed, reflexes, etc.

Knowledge = how educated the character is.

Courage = ability to perform under extremes.

Resources = how much cash, favors, influence the character can call upon.

Skill = How good the character is at the things he/she does. Roll once for profession and each hobby/interest.

Rating	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fitness	None	Feeble	Sickly	Average	Exceptional	Strong	Olympian
Agility	A rock	Clumsy	Slow	Average	Quick	Fast	Lightning
Knowledge	Brain-dead	Illiterate	Drop-out	High school	Undergrad	Grad school	Nobel laureate
Courage	Powerless	Cowardly	Cringing	Average	Brave	Mighty	Heroic
Resources	Beggar	Pauper	Broke	Comfortable	Well-off	Wealthy	Rich
Skill	Clueless	Incompetent	Sloppy	Competent	Great	Expert	Master

The player needs to choose a name and profession and major hobbies for his/her character. Choose 1 profession and a number of hobbies/interests/past times equal to Knowledge score.

Example Professions: Foreign Legionaire, Spaceship Crewman, Colonist, Ranger, Exobiologist, Ditch Digger, etc.

Example Hobbies: Hunting, Computers, 1 Foreign Language, Horsestuff, etc.

Default for Skills is 1. Default for skills related to the character's profession and interests is 2 (ex. A doctor attempting to identify a chemical has no skill in Chemistry. He/she must roll 2 or less on 1d6 to succeed).

To check for the success of a given action, the player must roll the character's score or less in a skill or attribute. A roll of 1 is an automatic success. A roll of 1 followed by a second roll of 1 or 2 is an outstanding success. A roll of 6 followed by a second roll of 6 is an automatic failure.

Contested rolls - subtract the defender's rating from the attacker's. Remember, a roll of 1 is an automatic success.

Ability	Fitness	Agility	Knowledge	Courage	Resources	Skill
Human	3	3	3	3	3	3
Big dog	4	5	0	3	0	3

Damage: Run over by a truck, blown up by grenade, etc. = d6 (lethal to nonlethal) Large caliber guns, chainsaws, flamethrowers, etc. = d6 (lethal) Small-caliber guns, swords, etc. = d3 (lethal) Knives, clubs, etc. = d2 (lethal to nonlethal) Punch, bite, kick, etc. = 1 pt (lethal to nonlethal)

A character can take damage equal to their Fitness rating. Each point of damage (lethal or non-lethal) subtracts that number from the character's current Fitness rating. Each point of damage also reduces all skill checks by an equal amount. When Fitness reaches 0, the character is incapacitated. If the damage is lethal, the character will die in (Fitness) rounds. Characters may attempt to avoid nonlethal damage by rolling under their Fitness on a d6. Lethal damage can be avoided by rolling under Fitness on 2d6. Healing/fitness is recovered as determined by the referee - you'll recover faster in a hospital than you will fighting a horse.

All other situations should be handled as Cinematically Appropriate (i.e. if it'd make a good movie, it'd probably make a good RPing scene).

Pretty simple, eh?

NOTE: CAMPAIGN IDEAS AND SETTINGS ON THIS PAGE MAY NOT REFLECT THE "ORTHODOX" 2300AD UNIVERSE.

SPOILER WARNING!!! AT LEAST ONE KAFER SOURCEBOOK SECRET IS REVEALED HEREIN!!!

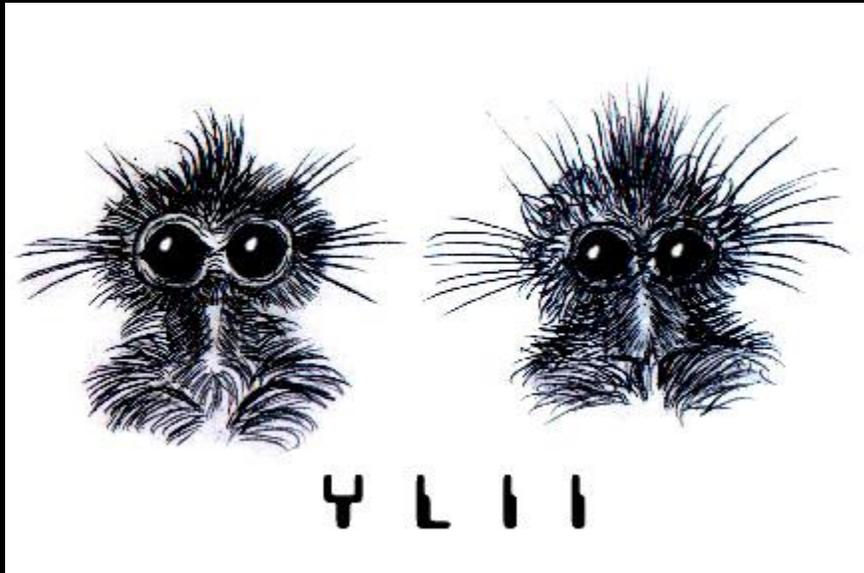
THIS MATERIAL IS INTENDED FOR USE WITH THE PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED KAFER SOURCEBOOK AND CHALLENGE ARTICLE.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO WILLIAM KEITH, JR.
AND LIZ DANFORTH FOR DESCRIBING THE YLII AND TO CHARLES GANNON FOR EXPANDING ON THEM.

BY THE WAY, IF ANYONE KNOWS HOW TO PRONOUNCE "YLII", PLEASE EMAIL ME THE PHOENETICS!!!

Using Ylii in 2300AD Campaigns

The Ylii are perhaps the most enigmatic of the known sophonts in the 2300AD universe. The Ylii are unknown as a living species to humanity in 2300AD at the beginning of the First Kafer War.



During the course of the war, humans may come in contact with the Ylii in one or more of the following ways:

1. **Ylii artifacts found in association with Kafer artifacts.** Size and construction differences between Ylii and Kafer devices as well as the differing environmental needs of each species will clearly point to the presence of a second type of sophont among Kafer forces if "Kafer" artifacts are subjected to careful scrutiny by an astute observer.

2. **Ylii dead found among Kafer dead.** The Ylii corpses, however, could easily be mistaken for Kafer livestock to the casual observer. An alternative scenario is that the corpses of escaped Ylii slaves could be mistaken for previously unknown native species on planets where Kafer-Human battles have occurred. This could eventually result in an academic wild goosechase as exobiologists begin looking for native populations of Ylii on non-Ylii worlds.

3. **Ylii observed in Kafer bases** (not likely on the front lines). An alternative scenario is that humans attempting to contact Kafer forces might inadvertently contact an Ylii technician instead.

4. **Captured humans may observe or even make contact with Ylii among Kafer forces.** This is very unlikely even if the Kafer are attempting to communicate with the humans - but the discrepancy between Kafer computers and Ylii computers may indicate to the observant (and less injured) prisoners that the Kafer are using trans-specific equipment. On the other hand, the organic appearance of Ylii artifacts *might* cause observers to mistake the devices for Pentapod constructions. The political ramifications of *that* mistake would be interesting to say the least...

5. Escaped (or lost) Ylii may come into contact with human forces hunting down surviving Kafer on liberated worlds. In our 2300AD campaign, Ylii were first discovered on Aurore in the aftermath of the defeat of the Kafer occupation forces. Ylii technicians, being unable to fend for themselves, approached human troops in an attempt to find food and shelter (they apparently mistook humans in high-threat environment armor for Kafer soldiers). This resulted in knowledge of the Ylii, but how they reached Aurore and what they were doing there was less easy to discover.

6. Ylii from SS -27 6854, DK +32 2390, or DK -33 1023 may be able to travel out-system and enter Human Space along the French Arm. Given the Ylii emphasis on organic solutions to technology, it is possible that Ylii spacecraft might be mistaken for those of the Pentapods at first. An equally possible scenario is that Ylii contact ships might blunder into human military fleets and come under attack as stressed human forces resort to a "shoot first and ask questions later" posture.

7. Considering that the Ylii, Pentapods, and Ebers each established at least one interstellar colony, knowledge of the Ylii might originate in the files of the Pentapods or ancient records recovered from Eber ruins. Likewise, human exoarchaeological expeditions among the ruins of Ross 863 I and/or DM +5 3409 I might turn up evidence of the ruins' origins. This still will leave the Ylii-Kafer connection unknown to humans. A less likely scenario is that Kafer "historical records" (assuming such things exist) might yield evidence of prehistoric Kafer contact with ancient spacefaring Ylii.

Ylii Trivia

1. They are polytaxic, with at least two genera and two dozen species.
2. They have had a technological civilization in one form or another for over 100,000 years.
3. They evolved on a world orbiting a dim K2 V star.
4. They rely on biotechnology supported by inorganic engineering (exactly the opposite of humanity).
5. They have played a pivotal role in the development and support of Kafer technology for at least 300 years.

Ylii Physiology

***Warning/Disclaimer** - Some of this information is **NON-CANNON**: I've always felt the Ylii were far too "humanoid" in appearance as presented in the Kafer Sourcebook (sorry Bill, Liz, etc.). Ergo I've altered some aspects of Ylii physiology in my own 2300AD campaign.*

1. Ylii are covered in thick "fur". This fur is derived from structures that were more similar to insect hairs than to mammalian fur. Ylii "fur" and "hair" originally evolved to serve as a sensory organ rather than for insulation.
2. Highly elongated hairs (vibrissae) are utilized to sense air movement, for touch/distance, detection of sound, etc.
3. Eyes are enlarged - the Ylii, in addition to evolving on a world orbiting a K2 V star much dimmer than Sol, are nocturnal. Their vision becomes greatly impaired in "normal" human lighting conditions. Anything brighter is physically painful to the Ylii and can result in permanent blindness after prolonged exposure (such as light sources used by the Kafer). Ylii vision can be most readily compared to a combination of an IR/thermal imager combined with a starlight scope.
4. Skeletons are lightweight cartilaginous struts using ball-and-socket joints; most joints can easily rotate through 180 - 270 degrees.
5. Despite evolving on a smaller, low-gravity world, Ylii reflexes are at least twice as fast as humans and Kafer. On the other hand, Ylii are physically quite weak and require mechanical or biotechnological exoskeletons to move in environments with gravities greater than 1.2 G.
6. The Ylii mouth is located anterior to the stomach. The jaws are extruded when in use and retracted when not in use. Muscles anchoring and powering Ylii jaws are attached to the Ylii equivalent of the pectoral/shoulder girdle - exteriorly, Ylii appear to have exaggerated "collar bones" and shoulders in comparison to humans. Ylii jaws are fairly

weak, reflecting the Ylii diet of soft vegetation, fruit-analogs, and slightly decayed flesh. The Ylii stomach produces a variety of digestive enzymes and acids to aid in dissolving and breaking up food materials.

7. The Ylii brain is a part of the spinal column. In gross anatomy, the Ylii brain resembles a series of 3 or 4 medulla oblongatas with variegate and rugose surface texture. Additionally, the Ylii brain is relatively diffuse, and spreads in a sheet along the sides of the abdominal struts that serve as ribs and a sort of cranium.

8. A six-chambered sequential pump serves as the equivalent of a human heart. Four of the chambers are associated with the ung lobes and are used for routine circulation of blood-analog (which is a blue-purple). The remaining two chambers are used as "reserve" chambers in the event of damage to one of the other chambers, and as a sort of "supercharger" allowing additional blood-analog to be oxygenated for bursts of energy when needed. This arrangement is analagous to the adrenal gland systems of terrestrial mammals. This arrangement also serves to supply the Ylii brain with proportionally more oxygen than a human of equivalent size.

9. There are four lung lobes just anterior to the brain. Respiration is accomplished through four breathing slits in the upper chest (two on each side) parallel to and just above the pectoral girdle.

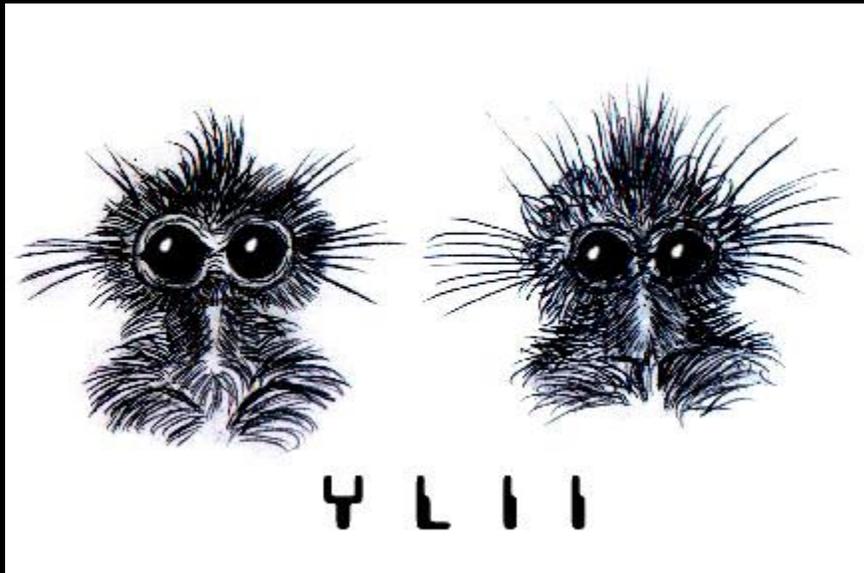
10. Ylii language is fluid, high-pitched, and sibilant, with a distinct "nasal" quality. The sound of the Ylii language, to the human ear, could be best described as a combination of hoots, hums, whistles, buzzes and hisses. Despite their lack of vocal cords, Ylii can adjust the shape and width of the breathing slits at various intervals along their length. This allows them to mimic many of the sounds found in the languages of other sophonts. Some Ylii are able to speak the Kafer language without a computer interface or voder, augmenting their normal vocalizations by snapping their jaws sharply to approximate the Kafer sound "!".

11. The overall appearance of the Ylii is similar to a semi-upright quadrupedal spider. Forelimbs and hindlimbs are used for both locomotion and manipulation. Likewise, Ylii hands and feet are indistinguishable and can function equally well for location or manipulation. When used as walking, Ylii phalanges rotate up from the ground, allowing Ylii to "palm walk". As a consequence, Ylii tracks do not evidence digits and appear as oval to round depressions similar to tracks left by terrestrial horses.

12. Ylii are capable of brachiatorial movement similar to that of terrestrial primates, but typically move in a fluid crawl using all four limbs. This movement is much more reminiscent of that of a terrestrial spider.

13. Ylii range in mass from 20kg to approximately 100kg and in bipedal height ranges from approximately 0.9 to 1.7 meters, depending on an individual's genus and species.

Taxonomy: Pending.



Examples of two species of Ylii - note the differences in number and length of vibrissae as well as orbital morphology.

Locations of Yli Ruins

American Arm

Ross 863 I*

DM +5 3409 I*

Ross 867 (undiscovered)

DM +3 3465 (undiscovered)

DK +17 4521 (undiscovered)

*No clues discovered yet as to builders, culture, or technology; considered to be unrelated sites constructed by unrelated sophonts.

Kafer Space

BK +00 2334

HC -6 2111

BK -1 1423

BK -2 0075

Yli Homeworld

SS -27 6854 (K2V star)

Yli Colonies

DK +32 2390 (raided frequently by Kafers)

DK -33 1023 (raided frequently by Kafers)

HC +3 1919 (conquered by Kafers)

SS -22 4654 (conquered by Kafers)

DK +21 6825 (conquered by Kafers)

Oneil 723 (conquered by Kafers; Kafer name for Oneil 723 is *Anach*ah*)

HC +25 1902 (conquered by Kafers)

Ylii Technology

1. High-tech; low energy requirements; minimal environmental impact.
2. Chemical fuels are used in place of burning wood.
3. Ylii cities were originally constructed in trees. Modern Ylii cities are slender, interconnecting columns/towers that can be several kilometers high; "roads" are networks of cables stretched between the towers (up to several kilometers above the ground) - the Ylii climb along these cables like a spider or a gibbon.
4. Mines and factories almost always underground.
5. Solar panel farms in deserts.
6. Computers - more like personal adornment; powered by wearer's body heat; Ylii computers are sophisticated enough to write their own programs.
7. Ylii may have attained spaceflight as early as 100,000 years ago.
8. Ylii are not hostile among themselves and have very few natural predators on their homeworld. As a result of this, Ylii weapons technology is virtually non-existent. Up to this point in time, the natural pacificity of the Ylii has prevented their extinction at the "hands" of the Kafers. As the Kafer occupation of several Ylii worlds continues, however, and Kafer raids increase in violence and frequency on unoccupied worlds, Ylii scientists and technicians are developing weapons and crude tactics with which to employ them. The end result could be either a weakening of Kafer forces, allowing humanity to gain the upper hand in the Kafer War, or complete obliteration of the Ylii by the Kafers. The most likely form of weaponry the Ylii are likely to develop and deploy will be biological and chemical weapons.

A Brief Tour of Known Space



Ylii towers on DM +32 2390 II. This image predates Kafer discovery of the Ylii colony. The planet suffered tremendous ecological damage as the tower-cities, some up to 12km in height, were destroyed by Kafer orbital attacks.



Klaxun winter. The cylindrical mounds on the slope behind the frozen river are partially uncovered cocoons that are secreted by hibernating organisms related to the Klaxun.



DM +4 123 V - Xiang Homeworld. The rings of the gas giant DM +4 123 V appear edge on. The light from the planet's K2 star makes the ice crystals of the ring appear golden in color. Like Aurore, the Xiang homeworld is geologically active and possesses a lower gravity than Earth. This allows the volcanic mountains in the distance to reach heights greater than the mountains of Earth.



82 Eridani IV - Black Sky tribal land. This region is named for the large amounts of eroded volcanic dust blown into the atmosphere during frequent wind storms.



Aurore, with Tithonus and Arcturus dominating the evening sky. The rocks have been scoured to near mirror smoothness by the tremendous tides. Tidal interface organisms related to sponge grass manage to survive by growing into the rocks.