



## Dinosaurs That Never Were: The Trogloraptor

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The planet Cretasus is home to dinosaurs that once roamed Earth millions of years ago. But dinosaur evolution on Cretasus has not been ended prematurely the way it was on Earth. Dinosaurs on Cretasus continue to evolve, sometimes beyond the strangest dreams of their Earth-like ancestors.

The first humans to set foot in the tangled jungles of East Valley returned to New Savannah bearing stories of gorilla-like dinosaurs. They called them trogloraptors. Scientists insisted the name must be inappropriate, as no relative of the nimble velociraptor could evolve into a beast so cumbersome as to provoke comparison with a gorilla, but the explorers were adamant: they saw trogloraptors.

The trogloraptor they described is a bulky, muscular, barrel-chested dinosaur whose front legs are longer than its rear. Although it usually moves on all fours, it stands eight feet tall when fully erect, and its broad, solid build (much like a gorilla's) led the explorers to estimate a weight of at least 600 pounds, if not more. Its domed forehead drops down to short jaws showing rows of sharp teeth, apparently adapted for an omnivorous lifestyle. Its two front legs – which rightly should be called arms – are extremely muscular. Its arms and legs all end in articulated claws, and herein lies the comparison to raptors: each of its rear feet bears the distinctive “killer claw” of the velociraptor.

Why then, ask skeptical scientists, does such a muscular creature bear claws? Would not such strength be unneeded if the claws were used for hunting? In answer, the explorers described their first encounter with trogloraptors. A party of five men, they were cutting their way down a jungle hillside, looking for a passable route by which to return with wagons. One of the more astute explorers noticed what seemed to be an animal trace. Some creature had repeatedly passed along

the trace, slicing the leaves from the trees to keep the passage clear.

Following the trace, the explorers came to a wide clearing in the jungle. They startled a pair of styracosauruses grazing on the underbrush. The explorers moved forward as the styracosauruses loped away, only to be startled themselves as a half-dozen gorilla-like reptiles raised themselves from where they had been napping in high grass.

For a long moment, nobody moved. The explorers' gazes were locked by the deep, dark eyes of the muscular creatures only thirty yards away. The creatures showed no hint of fear, nor any sign of aggression. They merely stared. Then they turned and jogged on all fours into the underbrush. As soon as they reached the clearing's edge, they launched themselves into the trees and swung away hand-over-hand.

The explorers saw the creatures on several other occasions, never at such close range as on their first encounter, but they did witness them in combat. Once again, they were unaware of the trogloraptors' presence until the creatures burst from the forest canopy above them. Before the explorers could un-shoulder their rifles, the trogloraptors had landed on a nearby stegoceras, which they proceeded to disembowel and then devour. This and subsequent observations confirmed the complementary uses of heavy muscle and sharp claws: trogloraptors hug or grapple an enemy with their long front arms, while slicing with their rear claws. With the enormous strength in their five-foot-long front arms, they are able to pin down even some larger dinosaurs while their rear claws eviscerate them.

The existence of trogloraptors is still a matter of contention. Only a handful of explorers have seen them – or, that is, *claimed* to have seen them. Scientists are divided on their taxonomy (and, in some cases, even their existence); the



debate will only be settled if someone returns with a living specimen, or at the very least, a well-preserved skeleton. Regardless, the pubs of New Savannah are alive with talk of these unusual dinosaurs. They provide a glimpse into what could have been on Earth, if our own dromaeosaurids had only evolved for a few million more years.

## TROGLORAPTOR (“GORILLA LIZARD,” “GORILLA RAPTOR”)

	<b>Trogloraptor</b> <b>Large Animal</b>
<b>Hit Dice:</b>	5d10+20 (48 hp)
<b>Initiative:</b>	+1 (Dex)
<b>Speed:</b>	40 ft.
<b>AC:</b>	14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural)
<b>Attacks:</b>	2 claws +8 melee, bite +3 melee
<b>Damage:</b>	Claw 1d3+5, bite 2d4+3
<b>Face/Reach:</b>	5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
<b>Special Attacks:</b>	Improved Grab, Disembowel
<b>Special Qualities:</b>	Scent
<b>Saves:</b>	Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +2
<b>Abilities:</b>	Str 21, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 11
<b>Skills:</b>	Balance +9, Climb +13, Hide +9, Jump +5, Listen +9, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +4
<b>Climate/Terrain:</b>	Warm forest
<b>Organization:</b>	Pack (5-8)
<b>Challenge Rating:</b>	4
<b>Treasure:</b>	Standard
<b>Alignment:</b>	Usually neutral
<b>Advancement:</b>	6-10 HD (Large)

The trogloraptor is an evolutionary offshoot of the dromaeosaurids, the branch of dinosaurs that includes velociraptor and deinonychus. The trogloraptor retains traces of the “fleet-footed reptile” physique that marks its genetic cousins, but is a fundamentally different creature, having spent millions of years adapting to life among the trees in dense jungle terrain. The trogloraptor’s long, powerful arms are perfectly suited to climbing, and it is well adapted for fighting in close quarters.

### SOCIETY

As with the velociraptors, the trogloraptors are highly social. They spend all day in close proximity, chatting and grooming; a trogloraptor quickly gets extremely nervous if separated from the pack. Each pack is led by the largest creature, be it male or female (as the genders grow to similar sizes). The trogloraptors reproduce and mature slowly, so there is little challenging of the leader. By the time a suitable replacement is experienced enough to take over, the existing leader is usually old enough to voluntarily relinquish control.

Unlike velociraptors, the trogloraptors have little social organization beyond the basic unit of the pack. Packs do not band together in larger tribes or nations; the trogloraptor mind does not demonstrate the political acumen evident in the velociraptors. This is probably because it only takes a relatively small area of jungle to sustain a trogloraptor pack, thus giving them little incentive to travel and encounter their neighbors. Yet, even though trogloraptors lack the social intelligence of the velociraptors, they are still quite smart, and it is certainly conceivable that a charismatic leader could organize larger social structures if the need arose. Human encroachment may yet be the trigger for this.

### COMBAT

Trogloraptors are omnivores. Most of their diet is leaves and bark, but they are opportunistic predators who eagerly attack a seemingly easy target. They are not above scavenging as well.

Trogloraptors generally attack with an ambush. They stake out popular prey routes (the edges of streams, salt licks, forest clearings, and so on) and munch on leaves in the trees above. If no suitable targets walk beneath, they dine on leaves; but if the opportunity arises, they drop out of the trees onto their prey.





Trogloraptors initiate an attack with their front claws, using their bite only if they can't get in with their claws. With a successful claw attack, they hug their enemy so they can bring their rear sickle-like killer claws into the fray.

**Improved Grab (Ex):** To use this ability, the trogloraptor must hit a Large size or smaller opponent with its claw attack. If it gets a hold, it can use its disembowel ability.

**Disembowel (Ex):** Once a trogloraptor has grabbed an opponent with its front arms, it attempts to reach its enemy's soft underbelly with its rear killer claws. A trogloraptor that has successfully grappled an enemy may use its disembowel attack, even in the same round it attempts to pin the enemy. (The pin uses its front arms while the disembowel uses its rear claws.) Make the opposed grapple check for a pin first; if successful, the disembowel attack has the +4 bonus to hit a grappled enemy even though it comes from the attacker who is pinning you. (The trogloraptor's long arms and short rear legs allow it this exception to the normal rules.) If the opponent is not pinned, the disembowel attack can still be made as usual. It causes 2d6+10 damage with a threat range of 19-20.

**Skills:** The trogloraptor receives a +8 racial bonus to Balance, Climb, and Hide checks.

