

# ***TALES FROM THE WOOD***



**The Role Playing Game**  
**By Simon Washbourne & Mark George**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Wood - a place where animals live, love, fight and die

Tales From The Wood (TFTW) is a role-playing game in which the players in the game take the roles of creatures which can typically be found in and around the British woodland ; creatures such as Mouse, Rabbit, Vole, Squirrel and Hedgehog.

The creatures do have their own individual abilities - Mouse for example is extremely acrobatic, Hedgehog is tough and good in a fight, Mole can dig tunnels etc., but when Fox is on the hunt, or Owl has hungry owlets to feed then life becomes exceptionally difficult for everycreature. Then there is 'The Bane' but of this great evil more later.....

The game is coordinated by one of the players who has a different role to play in the game. He or she is usually referred to in games of this type as the gamesmaster or referee. In keeping with the setting the referee in TFTW is called the 'Gamekeeper' (GK). The GK has to spend time prior to an evenings' gaming preparing the adventure or scenario, called The Tale, deciding beforehand what the players (in the persona of their creatures) are trying to achieve and deciding what obstacles and help they will have along the way, be they natural, Man-made, of The Bane, or other creatures. The GK will also play the role of any creatures the PC's meet whether they are friendly, neutral or otherwise.

Whilst the GK may have set very clear goals for the players, the way they reach those goals may differ radically from those the GK had in mind. The GK therefore needs to be flexible and ready to ad-lib, or 'go with the flow' if the players start to do things that he or she hadn't accounted for, or written down (rest assured, they will). The players can always be steered back on course further along the line later on in the game if needs be.

Ultimately the main aim of TFTW though is to have fun, although the Tale may sometimes be tragic along the way.

## THE TALE

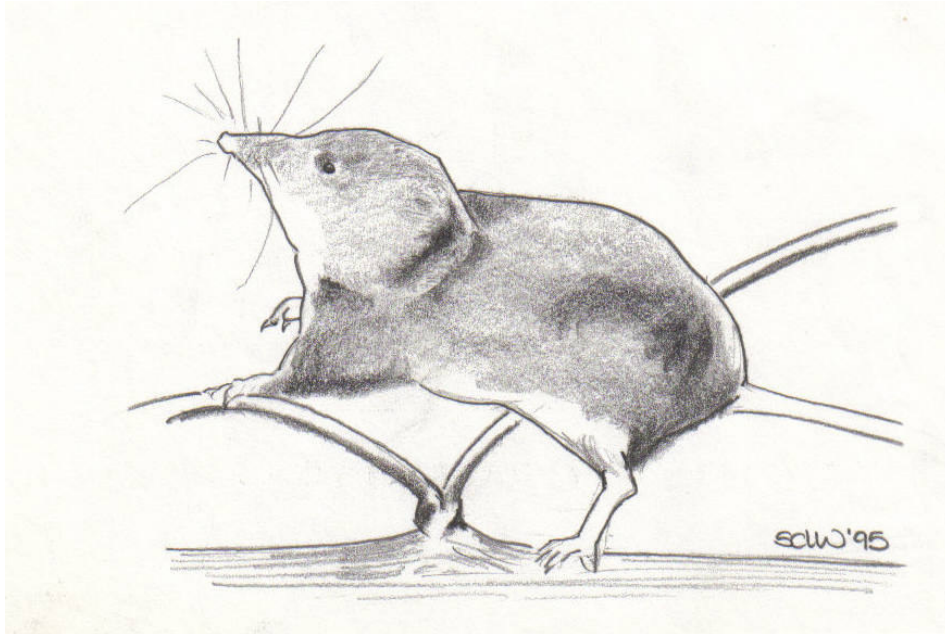
*Hello, my name is Grizzlegruff. I am a Gnome, and it falls upon me to recount this tale. I am not a natural storyteller as was my good friend Oakfellow, who would be chronicling this tale but for the fact that he received the call from Pan to journey to the Great Forest up Above, only a few weeks past. I therefore dedicate this Tale to his memory, and to the memory of all the many creatures who live, love, fight and die in The Wood.*

*Where does one start with a Tale of this magnitude? With The Wood itself perhaps? Yes that is most appropriate, The Wood.*

*The Wood is more than merely a home for the many hundreds of animals, birds, insects and other lowlier forms of life, it is a living, breathing and feeling entity. The Woods' vitality is reflected in the health of its inhabitants and their health is good for The Wood. When The Wood suffers, we all suffer. Our relationship is linked,*

*symbiotic. We need The Wood, The Wood needs us. We creatures who understand this relationship and seek to perpetuate and maintain this balance are followers of what is called 'The Way of The Wood' or more simply 'The Way'.*

*Through the ages there have been others who have sought to upset this harmony, thinking in their own warped mentality that somehow such an imbalance could be worked to their own advantage. This perversion of The Way of The Wood is known as 'The Bane', and some creatures are more susceptible to its evil design than others. These misguided creatures are the Rats, the Weasels, the Crow and the Adders amongst others, but perhaps we should not blame them entirely for we believe that Man is by far the worst culprit and surely it is from Man that The Bane was first born?*



## DICE IN TALES FROM THE WOOD

Most of the actions performed by player-creatures (PC's) in TFTW are normal everyday activities where the player simply tells the Gamekeeper (GK) what his/her character intends to do and the GK simply relates to the player(s) what happens as a result. However, because life in The Wood is not always that simple there will be times when the GK will call for a dice to be rolled to determine whether an intended action was successful or not. This is often the case when external conditions could affect the outcome of what seemed to be a simple task, or when another creature is trying to stop the PC from succeeding. Be careful with the use of the dice in the telling of The Tale - use them sparingly and at dramatic moments when the fate of the creature is in the balance. Don't let the dice and the rules get in the way of enjoyment and the telling of a good story.



The dice used in TFTW are six-sided (d6) and ten-sided (d10). When the action calls for the player to roll a dice the GK will advise that type of dice to be rolled. Normally the abilities of the creature itself will determine which dice is to be used - if the creature has the appropriate ability then a d10 is rolled and if the creature does not have the appropriate ability then a d6 is rolled. There are essentially two types of action in TFTW - unopposed actions and opposed actions.

Players only ever need roll one dice at a time (either a single d6 or d10). However the GK will occasionally need to roll more than one dice at a time - two or three d6 together. In this case the resulting numbers are totaled and are denoted in these rules as 2d6, 3d6, 2d10 and so on.

*When one talks of The Wood, it is generally accepted that one means the whole of the environs of The Wood, not only the Brightwood wherein grow the mighty Oak, the Ash, the Elm and the Yew and where dwell Mouse and Squirrel and Shrew and Mole who love its sun dappled grasses and quiet glades and the comforting fastness of the tall trees. No, one also talks of the Tanglebriars, that dark shadowy region of thorn and thistle, ancient and brooding wherein live the Weasels and Stoats and Adders and Crows gathering in their twisted cabals and ever ready to pounce upon the hapless intruder.*

*Then there is the Frogmarsh, a largely open tract and from where, at night time, one can often hear the strange song of the Froglord and his minions drifting eerily around The Wood. That the Frogmarsh remains wet and misty is attributed to the River which splits The Wood and after twisting its way between the boles of the mighty trees spills out to feed the Frogmarsh before it gathers itself together again and continues its course to the lands of Man and beyond.*

*Many creatures thrive on, or in, the River including of course Water Vole and Otter, but not forgetting that Pike is ever present and ready to pounce from the reeds which border the Pond.*

*Let me not neglect the Meadow bordering onto The Wood. This place of course is home to many animals, but most particularly to that most wary of creatures, Rabbit with her vast network of warrens creating a labyrinth in which one such as I without the Lore to navigate those twisting tunnels could (and have) become hopelessly lost. Unfortunately for poor Rabbit this does provide the ideal hunting ground for Stoats and Weasels when they venture from the Tanglebriars on their nightly forays.*



## CREATING A PLAYER CREATURE

The first step for a player of TFTW is to decide which of the various animals that he or she would like to role-play. Players are limited to taking the role of one of the Followers of The Way of The Wood (unless the GK allows one of the others if a player has a particular favourite, but a warning to the GK here - many of the creatures of The Bane are predatory and they can be very much more powerful than the PC's. This may create less satisfactory games as their only enemy, in the main, tends to be Man).

Alternatively the GK could run a game where all of the PC's are of the same species, all Moles for example, as in Duncton Wood, in which case the GK will state his or her preferences at the outset.

Assuming the choice is a free one there are 12 creatures to choose from. The creatures described are generic for their type, for instance there are four species of mouse in the British Isles and whilst they do vary slightly the differences are not so great as to warrant four separate descriptions.

The various animal 'Lores' (described in detail later) can be used to differentiate between the type of creature portrayed (e.g. a wood mouse would have 'Wood Lore' and a harvest mouse would have 'Field Lore'). The GK should also bear in mind that all the rules for animal attributes and abilities are subjective and although they have been thoroughly researched and play-tested there is nothing that cannot be altered or changed if there is anything with which you disagree. If a favourite animal is not listed then there are guidelines in the 'Gamekeeper' Section to assist in the creation of additional creatures for use in TFTW.

### Creature Attributes

PCs in TFTW are defined by the use of Attributes, Lores, and Abilities. These characteristics describe something about the creature in simple numerical terms so that players can gauge their character's relative strengths and weaknesses. There are seven attributes in TFTW and these are :- Toughness, Sturdiness, Nimbleness, Craftiness, Viciousness, Alertness and Luckiness. The higher the value of the attribute the more able the creature is in performing tasks associated with that attribute.

A quick reference to the 'Player Creature' table will show the strength of some creatures compared to others as well as their weaknesses. Mouse for example is clearly the most nimble creature but not at all tough or sturdy.

Attributes are important because they govern the use of the various abilities of the creatures. The attribute value is added to the roll of the dice to determine whether the animal has succeeded in an action or not.

**TOUGHNESS (TO)** This attribute represents the sheer brute strength of the creature. Taken into account will be considerations such as the strong fore-paws of Mole. Toughness is used to determine what an animal can move or carry/drag, as well as the power it can get into a bite or claw attack.

**STURDINESS (ST)** A measure of the size, bulk and relative constitution of the animal. It helps in recovering from the effects of poisons/toxins, shrugging off disease and physical punishment (particularly in Tooth and Claw).

**NIMBLENESS (NI)** This represents the creature's speed, agility, quickness. Its use is mainly for determining such activities as climbing, leaping and fleeing. Small creatures tend to be more nimble than large ones.

**CRAFTINESS (CR)** General cunning, wit and intelligence are encompassed within this attribute. Usually, the craftier creatures are the predators.

**VICIOUSNESS (VI)** This represents the animal's fighting ability and natural predatory instinct, as well as natural willingness to kill and hunt. Carnivorous creatures obviously tend to have higher values than herbivores. A low value is indicative of timidity.

**ALERTNESS (AL)** This attribute covers the overall perception and wariness of the creature. It takes into account **all** of the senses and includes '6th Sense'. Note that most creatures make up for the lack or poor ability in one of their senses by having heightened abilities in other senses (e.g. mole is virtually blind but he has a very keen sense of smell/touch).

**LUCKINESS (LU)** This attribute sets player-creatures apart from ordinary animals in 'The Wood'. Only player-creatures have a luckiness attribute. Luckiness is used to improve a creature's chances of success at an ability or attribute roll by a simple addition to the total. The number of points in LU is the number of points that may be added to any rolls during the scenario either one point at a time or all of the points together (if a creature has a Luckiness of more than 1). 'Used' Luckiness points are 'recovered' at the start of the next adventure.

Players can raise their creatures' Attributes above the starting values by spending 'experience' points earned on adventures. The only limit is that in the case of Toughness and Sturdiness there are maximum values (listed in brackets on the Player Creature table). The reason there are maximum values for these attributes is that to the main degree these are governed by the actual size of the creature and therefore there is a natural limit on how tough or sturdy a creature can be.



## Creatures of 'The Way'

Creature	To	St	Ni	Cr	Vi	Al	Lu	Abilities
Frog	1(2)	2(3)	3	2	2	3	1	Marsh Lore, Leap, Hide, Swim
Gnome	4(6)	3(5)	3	4	2	3	2	Gnome Lore, Hide, any 2 skills
Hedgehog	3(5)	4(6)	2	1	3	3	1	Wood or Field Lore, Tooth & Claw
Mole	3(5)	2(3)	2	1	3	3	1	Wood Lore, Field Lore, Tunnel Lore
Mouse	1(2)	1(2)	5	1	2	3	1	Field, Wood or Man Lore, Climb, Flee
Rabbit	3(5)	4(6)	3	1	1	3	1	Field Lore, Tunnel Lore, Flee
Robin	1(2)	1(2)	3	1	3	3	1	Choose 1 Lore (not Tunnel), Fly
Shrew	1(2)	1(2)	4	1	3	3	1	Wood Lore, Flee, Tooth & Claw
Squirrel	2(3)	3(5)	4	1	2	3	1	Wood Lore, Climb, Leap
Toad	1(2)	2(3)	3	2	2	3	1	Marsh Lore, Hide, Swim Intimidate
Vole	1(2)	2(3)	4	1	2	3	1	Field, Wood or Tunnel Lore, Climb, Flee
Water Vole	2(3)	3(5)	3	1	2	3	1	Marsh Lore, Swim, Tunnel Lore

**Abilities** are the natural 'skills' of the creatures in The Wood. Animal's paws do not enable them to manipulate things very well, apart from perhaps holding a piece of food in the case of squirrels and mice etc. Therefore, aside from these abilities, they have no 'skills' as such.

A creature can attempt any of the abilities on this list. If the creature has the ability then the player rolls a d10 whenever the ability is used. If not, then a d6 is rolled. The only exceptions are Fly and Wisdom.

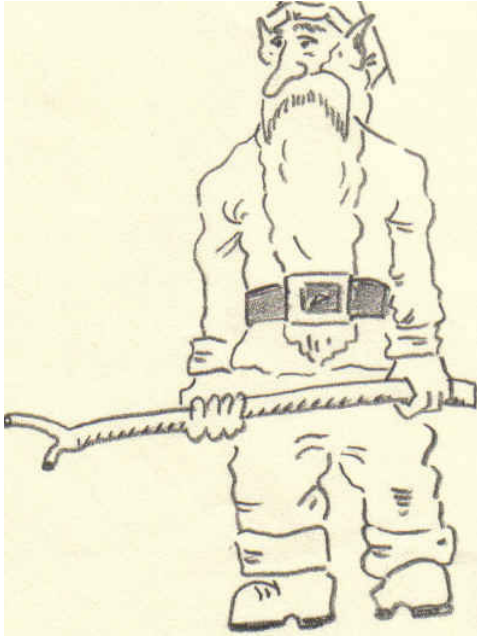
Only creatures that can actually fly have the Fly ability. No other creature may choose to Fly. Wisdom is the province of the Owl. Creatures may learn it but the cost is double the points cost of other abilities. In addition the ability needs to be taught by some-creature who already has Wisdom and is willing to take on a student.

Each ability has an attribute which governs its use (called the governing attribute). When rolling the dice to attempt to do something, the value of the 'governing attribute' is added to the dice roll. The higher the total the better.

**Lores** are a combination of instinctive and learned 'knowledge' of the habitat in which the creature normally dwells. As such, all creatures will have at least one Lore appropriate to the creature's normal habitat.

Where the 'Player Creature' table indicates a specific Lore, it is because that creature is normally found in the habitat indicated by the Lore. Where the lore is not specified or there is a choice of Lores then it is because there are a variety of different types within that species or that the creature can be found in a range of locations (birds for example fly far and wide).

**Gnome Skills** can only be learned and practised by Gnomes, since they all require a degree of manual dexterity that other creatures do not have.



## Finalising your creature

Once the player has chosen a creature to play in TFTW and copied the basic characteristics over to a character sheet a player has 5 points with which to improve the basic creature and to individualise his or her creature.

One completely new Ability, Skill or Lore from the list costs 5 points.

Attributes cost a number of points equal to the new level of the attribute. For example to increase the nimbleness of Vole from 4 to 5 would cost 5 points. Only one increase may be 'bought' at a time using these points, per attribute.

When PC's have finished adventures the GK will assign further points with which players may further increase their creatures initial abilities or purchase new ones according to these rules.

*Of the region beyond the meadow I will say little. Suffice to say that the meadow is bounded by a wall built by Man and beyond that is the Hard River, along which swoop the Roaring Owls, great beasts loosed by Man seemingly to kill or maim anycreature foolish enough to want to cross. Not that I understand why anycreature would want to cross as on the other side are the lands of Man and those creatures bent to Mans will, the dismal sheep and cows who seem to know nothing of The Way and have learned to accept their lot. Many suggest that The Bane begins and ends with Mankind and from what I have seen of Man who am I to argue?*

*Lord Stag is always aware when The Wood is endangered, and on those occasions he goes to the Meeting Stone at the centre of the Brightwood. By clashing his massive antlers against the Stone, he summons the Lords of all of the other creatures to discuss the threat and what is to be done about it.*

*While the meeting is in progress, The Truce holds sway for all of the animals in The Wood. During The Truce no hunter is able to attack his prey, and so even the lowliest mouse is safe for the duration of The Truce. This is one of the most ancient of the Laws, and any creature guilty of breaking The Truce is either banished or slain by his Lord. Banishment is often considered the worse of the two punishments.*

*Once it has been decided and agreed what is to be done about the threat, the Lords return to their own domains (still under the protection of The Truce) and gather their respective followers to let them know what is expected of them. Sometimes volunteers are chosen to perform duties, or to gather information, or even on occasion venture off on a long trek, depending on the nature of the threat itself.*

*The next time the sun rises or sets, The Truce is over, and hunters are able once again to go about their business. Of course, by this stage they are often very hungry.....*

## **ABILITIES, SKILLS & LORES**

### **ABILITIES**

**CLIMB:** The measure of how well a creature can cling to vertical or near-vertical surfaces and move around on those surfaces (cliff faces, walls, fences, trees etc.) as well as a measure of the animal's intrinsic balance (moving along tops of walls, branches etc.). The difficulty level will be affected by such factors as the slipperiness of the surface being climbed, weather conditions, speed of ascent etc. It would normally be an unopposed roll.

**FLEE:** This is the ability of the animal to avoid a pursuer, by virtue often of the animal's small size, but also speed, reactions, use of cover. Flee can also be used in Tooth & Claw, substituting this ability in an attempt to get away from an attacker. Flee is used only in opposed situations

**FLY:** Only creatures that can actually fly can use this ability (birds, bats). Fly ability can be used unopposed, weather conditions having the most effect upon the difficulty level. It can also be used opposed, as in a chase or race situation.

**HIDE:** The ability of the creature to blend with and use cover and camouflage of The Wood remain undetected. Usually used as an opposed roll verses a pursuer's Track ability.

**INTIMIDATE:** Used to frighten other creatures or to gain an edge in Tooth & Claw situations. It is used in opposed rolls only. An equal result is a standoff (a lot of growling or bluster, but with no creature actually frightening the other) but a result in favour of one intimidator over another will mean that the loser is so terrified (or simply surprised/shocked) that it loses one round where it cannot do anything. In Tooth & Claw this could mean that a creature is defenceless and the winner gets a free bite or blow, or that the creature can make good his brief advantage to escape from a much larger opponent.

In non-Tooth & Claw situations the result could indicate much more of a willingness to cooperate or the loser otherwise backing down from his or her original standpoint. A creature without the intimidate ability cannot actually intimidate another creature, although it would still get a dice roll (d6) + Viciousness to try to avoid being intimidated by a creature using the ability.

**LEAP:** The ability of a creature to jump to great heights from the ground or across wide gaps, such as when Squirrel leaps from the branch of one tree to another. The use of the ability will be affected by adverse weather conditions, slippery take off and/or landing etc. and will mainly be used in unopposed situations.

**SWIM:** The ability of a creature to keep afloat in water and move in the direction it wishes. In opposed situations it is also used to determine the quickest swimmer. Some creatures (Otter, Water Vole etc) may also use the ability for moving about freely underwater. The Task Difficulty will be affected by such factors as the speed of the current, rapids, weather conditions etc.

**TOOTH & CLAW:** The natural fighting ability of the creature. This ability is described in its own section later in these rules.

**TRACK:** Using mainly the senses of smell, sight and hearing the animal uses this ability to trail other creatures and to seek out hidden prey. The difficulty will be affected by adverse weather, the prey crossing water, delay in picking up the scent etc.

**WISDOM:** A rare and special ability which costs double the normal points cost to 'buy' a new ability (ie 10 points instead of the usual 5). It represents an intimate knowledge of The Way of The Wood, a sort of 'animal magic' and with the ability a creature can perform almost magical feats.

The GK is advised not to let this ability come to creatures too easily. Simply finding somecreature who can teach the character the Wisdom could be the subject of a long and dangerous quest.

Wisdom is split into six main categories or levels of difficulty:-

**Awareness (simple)** Allows the creature to foresee or predict the outcome of a specific event up to a short while into the future.

**Herblore (straightforward)** There are a lot of useful plants and roots in The Wood. The animal will know which of these are helpful in healing etc, and which are poisons to which creatures etc. It also provides the knowledge of whereabouts and when (time of year etc) they may be found.

**Woodwise (moderate)** This use of the Wisdom allows the creature to locate a specific item, thing or creature in The Wood. It might for example tell the creature where a lost friend is or where a Man trap is. This requires a few moments of concentration.

**Charm (hard)** Used to befriend an otherwise unfriendly creature. The ability does not give the creature power over the other, it simply makes the other believe that the character is a very good friend for a while.

**Contact Pan (very Hard)** Contacting Pan (who is the Lord of The Great Forest) requires the expenditure of one Luckiness point. Pan will give the answers to a few yes/no questions asked. Sometimes he will answer in a rhyme or a riddle, sometimes he will send an omen and sometimes he will not answer immediately but leave hints and clues to be found later by the creature. He will however always answer in some way, and does not lie.

**Summon Pan (formidable)** Summoning Pan is something not to be taken lightly and requires the immediate expenditure of 2 Luckiness points. If successfully summoned he will do more or less exactly what is asked of him. Often he will carry out requests exactly to the letter, so creatures need to be wary of how they word their request. Pan is the only deity that creatures acknowledge (even creatures of The Bane) and so they are easily cowed by the appearance of Pan.

The use of Wisdom by player creatures should be kept to a minimum so the GK is best advised to ensure it remains a rare ability and is treated with a degree of reverence. The GK should also treat it as much as a tool for his own use to aid the players when they are at a loss giving appropriate prods and pushes, as for the use of the players.

## LORES

**BEACH LORE:** A rare lore in TFTW but nevertheless included for completeness, Beach lore would be used to know when the tide is coming in (or going out) amongst the usual knowledge of the terrain and inhabitants.

**FIELD LORE:** Creatures with this lore will know all about sowing and harvest time and when the 'Roaring Dragon' (tractor) is likely to be about and how to avoid it.

**GNOME LORE:** This lore is unusual in that it does not relate to knowledge of terrain or habitat but to a specific and elusive creature - Gnome. It confers a knowledge of Gnome and his habits, his constructs, smell and where one might find him.

A Gnome knows a simple sign language involving placing markers of sticks and/or stones on the ground or scratches on trees. This lore also gives a creature a chance to work out what the messages mean.

**MAN LORE:** Like Gnome lore, this lore does not confer knowledge of habitat but of Man -his constructs, tools, habits and the smell of man. Man has a smell of his own, which is quite horrible to creatures not used to Man and this can be frightening to creatures without this lore. Some believe this to be the essence of The Bane. The lore does not give creatures the ability to work out how to operate machinery or how to read, but they might recognize signs from past experience, or might be able to figure out a simple device, such as how to open a simple locked cage etc.

**MARSH/RIVER LORE:** Aside from knowledge of what creatures live in the river or marsh areas this would also enable creatures to cross the marsh safely and know about such things as rapids and the current.

**MOUNTAIN LORE:** Another rare lore for denizens of The Wood. Specific uses would be about how to avoid (or cause) rock-falls.

**TUNNEL LORE:** Anycreature can dig a hole in the ground (use Toughness as the governing attribute) but this is the skill of the natural underground dweller, of digging vast complexes of tunnels and chambers, with confusing twists and turns, dead end passages and escape routes. It gives creatures the ability to navigate such burrows as well as judging direction and depth.

**WOOD LORE:** The most common lore for creatures of The Wood.

## GNOME SKILLS

Only Gnomes may have these skills as only Gnomes have sufficient manual dexterity to be able to carry out these tasks.

**BOATING:** With this skill a Gnome can build and repair a small row-boat or coracle or even a small sail-boat. This skill also covers the handling of such craft, although River Lore would be handy in the navigation of such a vessel.

**COOKING/BREWING:** The culinary skill of Gnomes to create lavish dishes, intoxicating ciders, wines and ales (which they love) and other assorted tasty food and drink (mainly salads if the fire-making is lacking).

**FIRE-MAKING:** The skill of building and containing a fire, using flints, sticks etc.

**FIRST AID:** The Gnome skill of setting broken bones with splints, treating cuts and bruises etc. It is not a knowledge of herbs, it is purely the technical aspect.

**MARKSMANSHIP:** With this skill the Gnome can make and use simple ranged weapons, throw stones, slings, bows etc.

**MUSICIANSHIP:** All Gnomes like a good sing song when they get together and this skill covers exactly that - singing, playing and even making a musical instrument.

#### ABILITY/SKILL/LORE USE

#### UNOPPOSED ROLLS

When a creature tries to use an ability and where the GK decides that there is a chance that the creature could fail the GK will call for a dice to be rolled. The type of dice rolled depends upon whether or not the creature has the ability in question. If the creature has the ability a d10 is rolled. If the creature does not have the ability a d6 is rolled. To the resulting number is added the value of the governing attribute for the ability used.

The GK will determine the Task Difficulty which provides a number which the dice roll + attribute must exceed in order to succeed. If the numbers are equal the success was only marginal. If the roll + attribute is lower then the creature failed.

#### TASK TABLE

<b>Task Difficulty</b>	<b>Roll + Attribute Required</b>
Simple	5
Straightforward	6
Moderate	7
Hard	8
Very Hard	9
Formidable	10

E.G. Mouse has fallen into the River and it flows quite quickly at this point. The GK assigns a 'hard' Task Difficulty, meaning that the Mouse player needs to get a total of 8 to be able to swim to the bank. Mouse has a Nimbleness of 5 and does not have the Swim ability so the player has to roll a d6 and needs 3 or more. If the player rolls a 1 or 2 then the Mouse is rapidly getting washed away and desperately needs help or to use his Luck point if he has one left. If the player rolls a 3 then the Mouse might make

it to the bank but be totally and utterly exhausted and needs several minutes to recover. Whilst doing so another creature may wander past and spot his plight.....

## OPPOSED ROLLS

Sometimes, especially in confrontations between animals (Tooth & Claw) it is not so much the situation that presents the obstacle to ability use but the opposition of another creature. This is termed an opposed roll and is not made on the above table. In these situations both or all of the creatures involved get to add the result of the dice roll to the appropriate attribute level to determine which of the creatures 'won'.

E.G. In our example above, suppose that Mouse managed to stay afloat by getting the 8 result needed. However the dreaded Pike happens to be about and spots the Mouse on the surface. Pike would sweep in for the kill (the GK rolls a d10 for the Pike who can of course Swim and gets a 6 to add to the Pikes' Nimbleness of 3 for a total of 9), and Mouse would be wise to try to escape. The player rolls another d6 getting a 3 which added to Mouse's Nimbleness of 5 (for a total of 8) is not enough. The player could declare the use of a Luck point (if he has not already used it) to get a total of 9 and just stay out of the Pikes' reach.





## TOOTH & CLAW

"Tooth & Claw" is the ability of the creatures of The Wood to fight. In all role-playing games, some form of combat inevitably occurs, and provides much of the excitement of such games. TFW is a fight for survival and fighting occurs amongst animals just as it does amongst Man. However, it is the reasons for animals to fight which are different to those of Man - animals do not tend to kill wantonly and unnecessarily, and in fact, except in the cases of predator versus prey (which tend to be one-sided affairs) death does not usually result from Tooth & Claw confrontations. Fighting in most cases is something to be avoided.

Tooth & Claw will not always necessarily be fatal, and will not usually be more than a brief flurry of activity, before one or other party flees (often between animals, especially the same species, and usually in mating season, combat occurs with the purpose of proving to each combatant which one is the stronger and once this has been proven, the loser will just slope away). Once an animal has been hurt, often this will be sufficient for it to quit the fight and attempt to flee. More often than not the victor will allow his opponent to get away, having proven himself the stronger (except of course in the case of a predator who intended to eat the vanquished).

Mothers with young tend to fight to the death if protecting their young. Most smaller creatures will instinctively avoid getting into Tooth & Claw situations with larger creatures (although Player-creatures may tend to have different motives than 'normal' creatures).

It is really down to the Gamekeeper to regulate how much Tooth & Claw occurs in his or her Tale and perhaps in each possible Tooth & Claw confrontation give one or two options other than to simply enter into combat. It has to be borne in mind that the Player-creatures are in the main smaller and less aggressive (vicious) than their enemies.

Tooth & Claw is carried out in basically the same way as any other opposed skill roll. If the creature has the Tooth & Claw\* ability then a d10 is rolled, and if not then a d6 is used, and the result of the dice roll added to the Viciousness attribute of the creature. The creature with the highest roll, gains the advantage in that 'round' of combat. (A round of combat is a flurry of activity where each animal attempts to land a blow or bite and is at most only about a couple of seconds long).

The creature who wins the round of Tooth & Claw has landed a blow, bite or scratch. The total by which the 'winner' exceeded the 'loser's' roll is then added to the Toughness attribute of the winner. From this number is taken the Sturdiness attribute of the creature that lost the round of combat. Any other modifiers from the Wound Modifiers table (below) are taken into account to leave a final number.

This number is referenced against the Wound Results table to determine how badly the loser has been injured, if at all.

## TOOTH & CLAW WOUND MODIFIERS

- + attackers(victors) Toughness.
- Victims (losers) Sturdiness
- +1 For a Gnome with a weapon – stick, stone etc
- 1 For Hedgehog, due to protective spines

## WOUND RESULTS TABLE

<b>Total</b>	<b>Result</b>
6 or lower	Buffet, no real harm done, but might scare loser off
7-8	Scratch
9-10	Maim
11 or more	Killed

## EXPLANATION OF WOUNDS

**BUFFET:** No real harm is done to the creature, but he might treat this as an indicative of the way the fight is potentially likely to go, and attempt to flee!

**SCRATCH:** The creature has been hurt, and is bleeding. All ability rolls are made at -1 effectiveness. If scratched again, the effects are cumulative so the creature would be at -2 on all ability rolls and -3 if scratched for a third time and so on.

**MAIM:** The animal is badly hurt. Possibly an ear has been clipped off or some other major damage. The animal is at -3 effectiveness on all abilities. Again effects are cumulative, so a maim result followed by a scratch becomes -4.

**KILL:** Exactly that. The Gamekeeper may allow the creature to expire slowly and carry out further actions (non combat) if he is left alone by his opponent, for a few rounds but no longer.

Another way for the GK to use these results for non-player creatures (NPC's) is to roll a dice when one of the above results against the NPC. The dice used depends on whether the NPC has Tooth & Claw or not. To the result add the creatures Viciousness in the usual way with the difficulty number being the wound result total of the attacker. If the NPC rolls higher then it may carry on but if is lower then the NPC will run (or slink, fly or whatever) off.

This could just as easily be used with the kill result to see whether the animal can continue to function, and for how many 'rounds' before succumbing to the Great Forest.

Where a creature chooses to escape rather than stand and fight, the player or GK may make a Flee roll, rather than Tooth & Claw roll. If the would be escaper's roll is higher than the attacker, it is assumed the creature got into cover, climbed out of reach, dived into a hole or whatever is appropriate to get out of the way (of course, it could then be tracked down).

## Example of Tooth & Claw

Splash, the Water Vole has come across a Weasel from The Tanglebriars on her way to the Meadow to hunt. Rather than waste an opportunity the Weasel attacks the unfortunate Splash who, perhaps unwisely, decides to stand his ground.

The Weasel attack is rolled by the GK on a d10 (as Weasels have Tooth & Claw) and to the 8 rolled is added the Viciousness of the weasel, which is 4, for a total of 12. The player rolls a d6 for Splash, and up comes a 4, which added to Splash's Viciousness of 2 gives a total of 6 - not enough! The Weasel has bitten the Water Vole.

The GK adds the difference between the totals (6) to the Toughness of the Weasel for a total of 10, and then subtracts Splash's Sturdiness (3) leaving 7. Looking at the Wound Table shows that a scratch has been dealt by the Weasel who seeing the blood goes into a frenzy. The Water Vole on the other hand is lucky to still be alive albeit wounded and now at -1 on any further ability uses. The 'rounds' continue in this fashion until one creature has had enough or one is injured or killed.

Suppose Splash decides to try to Flee from the maddened Weasel. The player rolls a d10 (thankfully this is the extra ability the player chose for her PC at the outset) and this time adds the creatures' Nimbleness (3) for a total of 10. From this is subtracted 1 (for the scratch) to give the GK a target of 9 for the Weasel. This time the Weasel fails to bite (the d10 comes up '1') and Splash safely slips away. The Weasel could however now try to follow by her Track ability but the GK decides that she will continue on to the Meadow, unfortunately for the Rabbits that live there.

TOOTH & CLAW – Expanded Rules ( These rules are optional).

1. If the winner of a round of combat beats the loser's roll by 5 or greater and is as large or larger than the opponent then the loser not only suffers the wound result as shown on the table but is also stunned for a round (i.e. cannot do anything).
2. If a natural 10 is rolled (i.e. only creatures with Tooth & Claw could potentially do this) it means the creature has got a hold or sunk his teeth into the opponent. This, of course, only occurs if the creature wins the round of combat. The effect of this is that unless the victim shakes the creature off, wounding is automatic (i.e. the victim doesn't get its own Tooth & Claw roll). To shake off an opponent who has got a 'death-bite' on a creature, make opposed Toughness rolls. If the victim of the hold wins he or she shakes off the opponent, but if the victim loses he or she continues to suffer automatic wounding.
3. There is a chance that upon receiving a maim that some sort of permanent injury is caused. At the end of a fight (assuming the creature still lives) a creature that has been maimed has to check on the following table for the resulting permanent affect of the wound.

D10 Roll	Result	Game effect
1-4	NO EFFECT	NONE
5	TORN EAR	-1 ALERTNESS
6	LOSE AN EYE	-1 ALERTNESS
7	NOSE RIPPED OPEN	-1 ALERTNESS
8	LIMB INJURY	-1 NIMBLENESS
9	MUSCLE DAMAGE	-1 TOUGHNESS
10	NASTY SCAR	+1 INTIMIDATE

## HEALING

A scratch will heal in a week and a maim will heal (apart from the permanent affects) in one month. This time may be reduced as a result of First Aid or Wisdom (Herb Lore). More details about wound recovery are contained in the Gamekeeper section.

*Stag is the Lord of The Wood, but each species of creature also has its own Lord who looks after the affairs of his or her own kind. We Gnomes are the only exception to this rule being too few in number to have any form of hierarchic structure.*

*It is usually the case that Lordship is attained by right of challenge and that if anycreature considers that he or she should be the new Lord he or she has to beat the current Lord in fair fight. Sometimes these fights are to the death but more often the loser is simply maimed - they are particularly savage amongst most species even the otherwise normally timid Rabbit, but then there is more than simply honour at stake. The victor not only becomes (or continues as) Lord and gets to represent his or her kind in meetings under the Truce, but in many cases also gets the pick of mate, the pick of the best dens, and possibly (depending upon species) a servant or two.*

*In return of course the Lord should be able to protect his kind and stand up for them at meetings, which is not always easy for the smaller types. I have known few female Lords, but those that do make it tend to make exceptional leaders. Occasionally it happens when a Lord dies and his mate takes over the mantle in many cases being at least as capable as their dead mate.*



## CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

### Player Creatures – Creatures of ‘The Way’

#### FROG

HABITAT: marsh, pond      EATS: insects, slugs, worms      APPROX SIZE: 3-5"

ENEMIES: Grass-snake, Fox, Stoat Weasel, Adder, Rat, Owl, Crow, Otter

These animals have short bodies and long powerful legs used for leaping and swimming. They vary in colour from yellow to black and males tend to be darker than females. Common Frogs like damp shaded conditions to keep their warty skins moist.

Frogs have a huge appetite and will continue to eat as long as food continues to be available. They tend to be active throughout most of the day. During the months of April to May they migrate to spawning ponds, traveling at night. Frogs hibernate during winter months. When alarmed, Frogs issue a weird loud shriek.

The much larger Marsh Frog (6-7") is more aggressive, less common, and also eats fish, lizards and mice.

#### GNOME

HABITAT: Wood, mountain,      EATS: fish, fruit, nuts, roots      APPROX SIZE: 10-

12" ENEMIES: Man

There are many types of Gnome, often called Brownies, Pixies, Sprites, Leprechauns, Knockers etc depending on where they are from but they are all essentially the same (but try telling them that!)

Gnomes have a preference for wearing simple clothing in brown, green and grey. They live to a great age, but since they hibernate often for very long periods of time (1000 years in some rare cases), they often seem confused at changes that have occurred in The Wood since they went to sleep.

Gnomes are generally fairly solitary types, not at all prolific breeders and females are very rare. Gnomes love drinking, smoking, eating, singing and dancing. They are great collectors or hoarders and often have some useful bauble or trinket lying around somewhere. They live in hollow trees, small caves or old abandoned animal dens.

#### HEDGEHOG

HABITAT: Wood, field      EATS: worms, slugs, insects, grass snakes, adders

APPROX SIZE: 8-10" ENEMIES: Adder, Fox, Stoat, 'Roaring Owl'<sup>1</sup>!

Sometimes called Hedgepig, Hedgehogs are one of The Woods' most ancient creatures. Other old names for them are Urchin, Hotchiwichi and Fuzzy Pig.

Hedgehogs hibernate over winter months. They are very tough and their spines are particularly useful in their battles with their enemy the Adder. Also useful against the Adder are the Hedgehogs powerful jaws and 'snagged' teeth which help them hold onto wriggling prey. As if that did not make the Hedgehog one of the best fighters around, their spines also provide excellent defence against any would-be predator.

Hedgehogs are not the quietest of creatures - they tend to crash through undergrowth snuffling and snorting as they go. Although their diet consists mainly of grubs and insects, they occasionally eat bird chicks and eggs as well as carrion and some small mammals!

NOTE: Whenever an attacker rolls a '1' in Tooth and Claw against a Hedgehog it receives the equivalent of a buffet result on the Wound Results Table (see Tooth & Claw) against the Hedgehogs spines.

Hedgehogs' spines act as a kind of armour (see Tooth & Claw Wound Modifiers Table). When curled into a ball, to all intents and purposes the Hedgehog is invulnerable to Tooth & Claw attack.

#### MOLE

HABITAT: Wood, Field      EATS: Worms, Grubs, Beetles      APPROX SIZE: 5-7"  
ENEMIES: Birds Of Prey, Fox, Stoat, Weasel. Rat, Cat

The Mole is generally a solitary creature. They have tiny eyes, and their vision is very poor. However to make up for this lack, Moles have extremely sensitive noses which can pick up vibrations within their warren of complex tunnel systems. They have no external ears.

Moles, like Hedgehogs and Shrews are insectivores. Moles vary greatly in colouring and albinism is a common feature of these aggressive tunnellers. Their fur is velvety, and always lies flat - a great adaptation for a creature that can move both backwards and forwards in it's tunnel equally well. Mole's forepaws are extremely powerful for its body, and its spade-like paws allow it to tunnel underground at a very fast rate.

The tunnel systems are really food collecting areas and the true nest is often below a large mound of earth or so-called 'fortress'. Close to the nest are deep permanent tunnels, further out they become much more shallow.

#### MOUSE

HABITAT: Wood, Field, Farm      EATS: Corn, Seeds, Berries, Acorns, Nuts,  
APPROX SIZE: 2-3"      ENEMIES: Birds Of Prey, Stoat, Weasel, Rat, Cat, Rook, Crow

Mouse is the smallest rodent in The Wood. It is a natural acrobat, fast and agile. Mice tend to make a regular winter retreat, but do not actually hibernate (i.e. they do not become torpid, or at least only for short periods). Over these winter months, the Mouse needs a large store of food.

There are several types of Mouse, Harvest Mouse, Wood Mouse, House Mouse and Yellow Necked Mouse. Most conform to the same basic characteristics, as far as the game goes, although there are slight size and colour differences.

They tend to make their nests from shredded grass and leaves in hedges and sometimes in the ground. House mice make theirs in buildings, and often use shredded paper or old cloth. In the summer the Harvest Mouse makes a unique nest built in the stalks of growing cereal crops, grasses or reeds.

## RABBIT

HABITAT: Field      EATS: Crops, Grass, Wild Vegetation      APPROX SIZE: 14-17"  
ENEMIES: Stoats, Fox, Weasel, Ferret, Man, Disease

Rabbit is a herbivore. It causes extensive damage to cropland, especially since there are very few cultivated plants that Rabbit will not eat.

A Rabbit bury or warren may house only a single family or may accommodate a number of families and cover a considerable area of land, involving a vast network of tunnels. There will be bigger warrens up to 50 entrances and exists.

Rabbit is an active creature especially at night, although it is often about at dawn or dusk also. Rabbits are extremely wary and timid, and will give warnings to its fellows below ground when danger is present by thumping the earth with it's hind feet. Its fur tends to be a sandy brown colour, although other colours are not unknown.

Rabbits are generally greyish-brown in appearance, but other colours, including black, are not uncommon. They have long ears (not as long as Hares') and large rear feet. The tail of Rabbit is short and pale or white.

## ROBIN

HABITAT: Wood, Field, Park      EATS: Worms, Insects, Grubs, Berries  
APPROX SIZE: 5-6"      ENEMIES: Rook, Crow, Raven, Cat, Fox, Stoat, Adder, Weasel,  
Birds of Prey

Male and female Robins occupy separate territories in winter months. Males seldom move far from their territory. Females sometimes move further afield, even migrating on occasions.

Robins have elaborate displays with their red breasts which form part of their visual danger signal to other Robins, trying to enter their territory. They usually nest in a hollow on a bank, in a hedge etc. The Robin normally lays a clutch of 4-6 eggs.

## SPARROW

HABITAT: Wood, field, park      EATS: worms, insects, grubs      APPROX SIZE: 5-6"  
ENEMIES: Rook, Crow, Raven, Cat, Fox, Stoat, Adder, Weasel, Birds of Prey

Sparrows have brown - streaked upper plumage, grey crown, and whiteish chests. Often found to 'squabble' and can be quite aggressive at times, sometimes mobbing larger birds in small groups to keep them away.

The Sparrow nests in a hole or cavity in a building or wall, or in tall hedges or ivy and sometimes they nest in colonies. The nest itself is large and untidy. Up to five eggs are usually laid in a clutch.

## SHREW

HABITAT: Wood

EATS: insects, worms, grubs

APPROX SIZE: 2-3"

ENEMIES: Weasel, Stoat, Fox, Rat, Cat, Owl

Shrews bear only a superficial resemblance to mice. Shrews have a pointed snout, and a diet which consists of invertebrates (making them insectivores). There are 3 species of shrew common to Britain. They differ slightly in size and colouration, and all are equally active night or day.

Shrews have a mildly toxic bite, which will be irritating to any creature bitten by a Shrew. Shrews are very highly-strung and aggressive.

The Water Shrew is somewhat larger than both the Common Shrew and the Pygmy Shrew (the latter of which is more likely to be found in open fields than the other types).

NOTES: Toxic bite; Any creature bitten (and receiving at least a 'scratch' on the Wound Result Table) by a Shrew that has an equal or lower Sturdiness will become affected and suffer a -3 penalty for 2 rounds following the bite.

Creatures with a Sturdiness of up to twice that of the Shrew will also be affected for 2 rounds, but only at -1. Creatures with a higher Sturdiness will not be affected.

## SQUIRREL

HABITAT: Wood EATS: Fruit, corn, nuts, bird eggs, shoots APPROX SIZE: 8-10" ENEMIES: Stoat, Weasel, Fox

Squirrels are rodents. They are superb climbers of trees and can leap quickly from branch to branch with ease. However they also spend a lot of their time on the ground, gathering nuts and berries for storage over winter months. Squirrels do not truly hibernate.

There are two types of squirrel generally found in Britain, Red and the much more common Grey. The Grey is slightly larger, but the Red tends to be prettier and even more graceful.

Squirrels are active throughout 24 hours, especially just after dawn and before sunset. Their nests or 'dreys' are built in a tree hole or, more commonly built close to the trunk or main branches and made of twigs and large leaves, the interior made of softer mosses and leaves.

Litters vary in size from 1-7, and the male takes no part in raising the young.

## TOAD

HABITAT: Marsh, Pond EATS: insects, slugs, worms

APPROX SIZE: 3-5"

ENEMIES: Grass snake, Adder, Stoat, Fox, Weasel

Toads are equally as greedy as Frogs. Toads are nocturnal, and do hibernate in winter. Toads have an excellent defence - they can puff up their warty bodies to appear much larger than they actually are (intimidate).



Although toads resemble frogs, they tend to crawl rather than jump or hop with their long hind legs. The skin of a toad is dry, dull and warty. Colouration varies greatly depending on the season, but ranges from olive to brownish-black.

The Common Toad is the larger of the two species found in Britain, but the Natterjack Toad is the noisiest, with its very loud trilling croak. When it is alarmed it has the capacity to change colour (intimidate).

#### VOLE

HABITAT: Wood, field    EATS: corn, seeds, berries, shoots, nuts    APPROX SIZE: 4-5"    ENEMIES: Rook, Owl, Stoat, Rat, Cat, Fox, Crow, Weasel

Voles are larger than mice which they otherwise resemble but have a rounder snout, and shorter tail. There are two varieties of Vole, Red Vole and Field Vole, which conform to much the same characteristics other than different colouration. The Field Vole has a tendency to burrowing extensively underground, (Tunnel lore) and Red Vole is also called Wood Vole or Bank Vole.

The Bank Vole tends to have a russet colouration, and the ears are more prominent than those of a Field Vole, which tends to have longer shaggier greyish-brown fur. Litters vary in size from 3-6 and they will have several litters between spring and autumn.

#### WATER VOLE

HABITAT: riverbanks in wood, field, marsh    EATS: seeds, corn, nuts, berries, shoots  
APPROX SIZE: 7-8"    ENEMIES: Pike, Fox, Mink, Stoat, Weasel

Water Vole is sometimes referred to as Water Rat and it is from this name that 'Ratty' comes in 'Wind in the Willows'. Although they do resemble rats with their long tails and coarse dark, sometimes black fur, Water Voles have smaller ears and shorter, rounder muzzles making them much more attractive.

They are much larger than their cousins the Red and Field Vole, and are excellent swimmers.

Litters of 4-6 young are born throughout the summer in their extensive burrows built into river-banks, or sometimes on the surface in dense reed bed

#### *Hedgehog's Tale*

*Hedgehog had finished explaining his plan to Mole. Mole emerged from beneath his paws, which he had placed over his head in exasperation at the sheer stupidity of what he had just heard. "You can't do it" he exclaimed, "it's madness and you'll get yourself killed!". Hedgehog was unmoved. He was going to prove that he was the toughest and bravest creature in The Wood by spending one whole night on the Hard River. "I'd best get going" said Hedgehog finally, and dislodging the pile of leaves in which he and Mole had immersed themselves, set off across the clearing.*

*Mole didn't know what to do. He thought for a while and then decided that running round in circles whilst wailing loudly might be the best bet, so he did. When he had finished, and whilst he he laid there panting for a while, it was then that he realised he was being watched. Sniffing at the scent, he was pleased to note the watcher was none other than his friend Squirrel.*

*"I couldn't help but notice that you appeared to be distressed" she said "anything I can do to help?"*

*Mole calmed a little. Squirrel had that effect on many creatures - something to do with her soft voice, large eyes and appealing bushy tail, Oakfellow always says.*

*"It's Hedgehog" blurted out Mole "he's intent on doing something really stupid and I haven't been able to stop him".*

*Mole then proceeded to explain Hedgehogs' plan to Squirrel whose face became graver as the story unfolded.*

*"Oh dear, I saw Hedgehog talking with a couple of those vile Weasels from the Tanglebriars only the other day and I would bet a pawful of nuts that they have something to do with this whole business" she said unable to keep the tone of concern from her voice.*



## THE GAMEKEEPER

You as the Gamekeeper have the tough but rewarding task of bringing all this information together, and creating an interesting Tale, and of breathing life into The Wood and its' denizens. For most role-playing games this may seem daunting enough, but for Tales From The Wood this would initially appear doubly-so. There are no 'stock' adventure ideas in TFTW - no dungeon crawls, no barroom brawls, no caravan guarding jobs to be had.

However, in a way this forces you to be more creative and think the adventure through and this in itself means the players have to also be more inventive in their play. Just sitting down and thinking hard about The Wood and its inhabitants will start to give a creative Gamekeeper some simple plot ideas.

Your job is that of the storyteller, actor, director and producer all in one. Added to that you need to be at least familiar with the game rules. The game rules should not, however, get in the way of creativity and the Tale is far more important than any of the rules in TFTW. Treat the rules more as guidelines that can be dropped if they begin to get in the way.

In The Wood there are the villains typical in most other role-playing games, there are the dangers to be avoided and the other 'evil' roles filled by the Weasels and Stoats and other creatures of The Bane. There are also the sages (Owls and other creatures with Wisdom), the would be helpers, the ones with whom careful negotiation must take place to secure aid if needed - but a wrong word or misplaced deed and they can become a deadly enemy. Of course, the adventurers are the PCs and their friends, the Followers of the Way.

Most animals in The Wood are not 'adventurers', they merely go about their daily business of eating, rearing their young, avoiding being eaten etc. These are the NPCs (non-player creatures) and their attributes are essentially taken direct from the appropriate 'Creature Tables'.

Reading the books listed in the introduction will give you some adventure ideas. Reading some natural history books will give further adventure ideas. However, as the Gamekeeper you should try to ensure the game does not start to become a lesson in Natural History. The right balance between realism and fantasy should be sought. To help you we have included some information about The Wood and the creatures that live there as well as three Tales which may be told exactly as they stand or may be dissected for the bits you feel will fit into your own style of play, or suit the players in your group.

In addition the short stories 'Hedgehogs Tale' and 'Frogs Tale' have been left deliberately unfinished in order that the GK may use the storyline presented to commence a simple adventure. The players create PC's from those presented (Hedgehog, Mole and Squirrel for example from Hedgehogs' Tale) and the GK reads the first part of the narrative. The players then take up the Tale from there and see how it unfolds.

## TIME IN TALES FROM THE WOOD

Hours, minutes and seconds are Man concepts. In TFTW animals do not live by the human clock, but by their biological clock. This tells them when to wake up, eat, sleep and mate.

The day is split into four parts:- 1) Dawn    2) Day    3) Dusk   4) Night

Certain animals prefer to go about their activities at certain times of the day. Those who operate by day are 'diurnal', at night 'nocturnal' and during dawn or dusk 'crepuscular'.

The GK need not keep a slavish record of time elapsed in TFTW (unless he or she really wants to), however on occasion, for example, during Tooth & Claw, it may be useful to keep a stricter sense of time. The concept of 'rounds' can be used in these situations.

A round in TFTW is a short period of time (in human terms a few seconds). Keeping track of rounds may be useful, for example, when Mole is trying to dig himself underground while Fox is rapidly approaching.

## MOVEMENT IN TFTW

During a day a creature may travel a number of (human) miles equal to its (To + St)/2. This is the maximum distance normally possible. Birds may fly double the normal range.

During a round movement is based on nimbleness. The creature with the highest Ni moves first and, relatively, the furthest. Eg compare mouse (Ni 5) and Fox (Ni 3). Mouse moves much more quickly and further than Fox in the short space of time represented by a round, but in a day a Fox may travel up to 6.5 miles compared to Mouse who can travel only 1 mile per day.

It may be of interest to note that one Man mile is equal to six Gnome miles.

## ANIMAL SPEECH IN TFTW

Firstly, animals in TFTW do not 'talk' as such. Their method of communication is a series of gestures, grunts, growls, squeaks, squawks, caws, hisses, hoots and the like, all of which together convey the appropriate message. The GK may make this language system as simple or as complex as he or she likes.

The simple method is to say that all animals 'speak' the same language. An alternative would be to say that each species speaks a different language, so for example, for Mole to understand and converse with Mouse he would need to learn Mousetalk. There could be a common tongue (perhaps invented by Gnome) with each animal speaking its own language.

Other possibilities are that 'foreign' animals speak a different language, eg, an escaped pet hamster or zoo escapee etc. Creatures from other Woods could perhaps talk differently, or birds could have their own language, and fish another, and so on.

## GUNS

Guns (called Thunderers' by those creatures that are aware of them) kill. It is as simple as that. If a creature is hit, it dies.

If a creature is trying to get away, it should get an opposed Flee! roll against the GK's roll for the Man firing the gun. If it is a farmer or poacher then it will have the appropriate skill (roll d10) but if it is a kid messing about or whatever then it is unlikely to (roll d6). Man generally has a Nimbleness of only 1 or 2.

A point of Luckiness spent may either be used in the normal way to increase the PC's chance of Fleeing, or in this case may be used to reduce the wound from 'kill' to 'maim'.

## CARS

Called 'Roaring Owls' by the creatures of The Wood, these horrific beasts, like guns, simply kill any creature hit by one.

A point of luckiness may be used to reduce any 'kill' result to a 'maim'.

Cars are also highly intimidating, and have a 'Viciousness' equivalent to 1 point per 10mph the car is traveling.

## POISONS

Poisons are not a common thing for creatures of The Wood to come across. Generally Man may use poisons for a specific purpose (eg Rat poison) or a creature with Wisdom may seek out a naturally growing poisonous plant for some reason. However they should really be used in way that is integral to, or important to, The Tale.

The GK simply needs to know the worst effect that is required of the poison (eg it kills, paralyses, causes sickness and vomiting etc) and the highest Sturdiness that the poison will effect, as well as whether there are any secondary or weaker effects at a higher Sturdiness.

eg The GK wants a Rat poison in his Tale and decides that he wants it to kill ordinary Rats. Accordingly he decides that the effect works on creatures up to 4 Sturdiness. Over this and up to 6 Sturdiness, he decides the effect is to make the creature violently ill and at -3 on all Task rolls for a whole day. At Sturdiness 7+ there is no effect.

The poison must be ingested (eaten) and so is placed in foodstuffs that would appeal to rats.

## FIRE IN THE WOOD

Fire is extremely dangerous to The Wood and its' inhabitants. All creatures (except Gnomes) are quite naturally terrified of fire, some believing it is the essence of The Bane, others believing it is one of Man's beasts, and others thinking it is just a mad ravaging creature, wild and uncontrollable. Most however are just plain scared of fire.



As the GK we leave it up to you whether you want to create a Tale that will involve a fire in The Wood, and what 'rules' if any, you will use. It is certainly best left for individual GKs to determine what effect they want by putting something as terrible as a fire in their Tale in the first place, and besides fires follow no rules anyway.

## USING LUCKINESS

The PCs will have a particularly tough time during the course of the Tale, being generally weaker than creatures of The Bane, and so any way they are able to gain an 'edge' to help keep them alive will be welcome to the players.

Luckiness represents that 'something special' that marks the PCs, and sets them apart from ordinary animals - giving them that almost 'heroic' stature, the stuff of legends. Each point of Luckiness that a PC has represents an additional point that may be added to the players' roll(s) during the course of the Tale, to turn an otherwise unsuccessful roll into a success. The point may only be used once per Tale. Players may 'buy' additional Luckiness with points awarded by the GK at the end of successful Tales in the same way they may gain increases in other attributes.

## CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

Although a range of foodstuffs is described for each creature, most creatures will tend to have a nibble at almost anything especially when hungry. Those living near to Man in particular will have sampled much of Mans' food waste from rubbish bins and the like – it often boils down to what is available. Described in the tables are the foodstuffs preferred and normally eaten by the creature.

Likewise enemies are far ranging - and birds of prey for example will eat most smaller animals, as will Rat, Fox, Stoat etc. The enemies described are mainly those that will prey upon the creature in question but sometimes they are enemies simply because they are in competition with each other.

These creatures are all normally non-player creatures. The GK may however allow players to choose from these animals. Be warned though, part of the fun and danger of TFTW is due to the fact that the creatures the players get to choose from are largely

much weaker than the others and therefore the fight for survival relies more upon exceptional role-play and less on the 'let's fight it out again' attitude of other rpgs.

### Creatures of 'The Bane'

<b>Creature</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>St</b>	<b>Ni</b>	<b>Cr</b>	<b>Vi</b>	<b>Al</b>	<b>Abilities</b>
Adder	2(3)	4(6)	3	2	3	3	Wood, Field or Beach Lore*, Hide, T&C, Intimidate
Buzzard	6(9)	8(12)	2	2	4	3	Fly, T&C, Wood Lore
Crow/Rook	4(6)	5(8)	2	2	3	3	Man Lore, Any other Lore (not Tunnel), Fly, T&C
Fox	6(9)	7(11)	3	3	3	3	Wood Lore, Track, T&C
Grass Snake	3(5)	6(9)	3	2	3	3	Wood, Field or Tunnel Lore, Hide, Tooth & Claw, Intimidate, Swim
Kestrel	4(6)	5(8)	4	2	4	3	Fly, Field Lore, T&C
Pike	7(11)	7(11)	3	1	3	3	River Lore, Swim, Intimidate
Rat	3(5)	4(6)	3	2	3	3	Man Lore, Any other Lore, Climb, T&C
Stoat	4(6)	4(6)	3	2	4	4	Wood, Field or Tunnel Lore, Climb, Track, T&C, Intimidate
Weasel	2(3)	2(3)	4	2	4	4	Wood, Field or Tunnel Lore, Climb, Track, T&C, Intimidate

### Other Creatures of The Wood

<b>Creature</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>St</b>	<b>Ni</b>	<b>Cr</b>	<b>Vi</b>	<b>Al</b>	<b>Abilities</b>
Badger	8(12)	8(12)	2	2	3	3	Wood Lore, Tooth & Claw, Tunnel Lore
Deer	14(21)	14(21)	3	2	2	3	Wood Lore, Man Lore
Hare	5(8)	6(9)	3	2	2	3	Field, Wood or Mountain Lore, Flee or Tooth & Claw
Otter	6(9)	7(11)	3	2	3	3	River Lore, Swim, Tooth & Claw, Track
Owl	4(6)	5(8)	3	5	4	3	Wood Lore, Fly, Tooth & Claw, Wisdom, Any Lore
Swan	8(12)	10(15)	3	2	2	3	Fly, River Lore, Swim, Any Lore

*"You'll have to go after Hedgehog and try to slow him down" declared Squirrel, "and I'll go and get help" she added, as an afterthought.*

*She turned, and in one swift movement had bounded up the trunk of the nearest tree, and was soon aloft in her own domain up amongst the leaves and branches.*

*Mole started scurrying in the direction taken by Hedgehog, knowing that all the while he closed on his friend he was getting ever closer to the dreaded Hard River of legend, a place he had always avoided so far, and one which he had no particular desire to visit.*

*Eventually, Mole could see the lumbering prickly form of Hedgehogs' rear in the undergrowth ahead. The air at this point was already tainted with the unnatural scent of The Bane from the Hard River, but Mole bravely pushed that to the back of his mind and rushed up to his spiky friend.*

*"Ahem" he coughed to attract hedgehogs' attention, "I thought you might get hungry so I brought this for you" indicating the fat juicy worm he had found on the way. He pushed it towards Hedgehog, who promptly gobbled it up with barely a pause, licked his lips, and continued on his way.*

*"I know where there are more like that" tried Mole gamely, realising that his gambit had not really worked as well as he would have hoped.*

*"Too busy " mumbled the rapidly receding form...*

## **Creatures of the Bane**

### **CROW/ROOK**

HABITAT: Wood, field      EATS: Insects, Worms, Grain, Mouse, Vole, carrion,  
APPROX SIZE: 17-19"      ENEMIES: Cat, Fox

Crow is slightly larger than Rook, but they are otherwise similar. Both have black plumage and beak, beady eyes and a fondness for carrion (dead meat). Both are strong fliers and are aggressive, with evil reputations, similar to that of their larger cousin the Raven. Crow is rarely seen in flocks, much more often seen either singly or in pairs. They sometimes roost with Jackdaws and Rooks most often in woodland.

Rook on the other hand roosts in high tree-tops in what is known as a Rookery where an average of 25 nests will be, but larger rookeries do exist containing up to 2000 nests although this number is rare.

### **BUZZARD**

HABITAT: Wood      EATS: Rabbits, Voles, Mice, carrion, small birds, worms  
APPROX SIZE: 24"      ENEMIES: Man

The Buzzard is a majestic bird of prey and one of the most common. It has a very large wingspan and is much larger than a Crow.

Though variable in pattern, most Buzzards are brown above and creamy below, with heavy brown spots across the breast and dark barring on the wings. They nest in trees and sometimes in craggy cliffs, and make nests from sticks and stems, often decorated with fresh sprays of greenery. They lay a clutch of 2-3 eggs.

### **FOX**

HABITAT: Wood      EATS: Mouse, Vole, Rat, Hare, Rabbit, Birds, eggs, fish  
APPROX SIZE: 25-30"      ENEMIES: Man

Fox is Britain's largest surviving carnivore, and the terror of The Wood, with no natural predators but a wide range of prey. Almost any creature in The Wood is fair game to cunning Fox.

Fox has a reddish fur, with a pale underside and black on the ears and front of the legs. The tail is bushy and tipped with white. Fox has proven to be extremely adaptable, many living alongside Man even though they seem to be enemies. Foxes are highly vocal animals, often for several hours after sunset. Sounds include intermittent high-pitched barks and a hoarse wailing bark.

A single litter of 4-5 young is born to the female (called a Vixen) in late March, and the family groups may stay loosely together, although the Vixen generally looks after the cubs.



## PIKE

HABITAT: Rivers, ponds    EATS: fish, Water Vole, Baby Swan  
APPROX SIZE: Ask a fisherman    ENEMIES: Man, Otter, Mink

Pike is an enormous and dangerous predatory fish. It has a long body of mottled colouration.

Pike waits amongst rushes and reeds, where its mottling makes good camouflage and then makes a sudden dash to clamp its prey in its massive jaws. Almost any small creature finding itself in the River is fair game for the monstrous Pike.

## RAT

HABITAT: almost anywhere    EATS: Almost anything    APPROX SIZE: 9-12"  
ENEMIES: Large birds of prey, Fox, Cat, Stoat

The Brown Rat tends to be larger than the Black Rat, but otherwise the two types conform to the same basic characteristics. Brown Rat is much the more common of the two, and has a more aggressive nature.

They have coarse fur of colour appropriate to their names, although there is a little colour variation and they have long, thick, scaly, almost naked tails.

Rat is a prolific breeder, is adaptable to almost any kind of habitat, often found in Man habitations, will eat almost anything and is a carrier of all kinds of diseases because of the abundance of lice and fleas it carries. Gestation takes only 10 days and litters can number up to 10, so it is easy to see why rumours of Rats in The Wood sends shivers down the spines of every creature.

## STOAT

HABITAT: Wood    EATS: Mouse, Vole, Rabbit, Hare, Rat, Birds, Mole, eggs  
APPROX SIZE: 12"    ENEMIES: Fox, Birds of prey

Often referred to as Hob, the word Stoat actually means 'bold' and this is certainly true of this sleek predator.

Stoat uses its intimidatory ability to the full when hunting Rabbit and Hare which are much larger than himself, to paralyze them with fear before pouncing for the kill. Stoat has a dull brown coat with white breast and a black tip to its long tail. In the winter months the Stoats' coat may turn entirely white except for the black tail tip. The body is long and slim.

The breeding nest may be in a litter filled ditch, niche in a stone wall, under a hedge or occasionally in rabbit warrens. The young are born in April or May and the litter numbers between 6-12.

## WEASEL

HABITAT: Wood    EATS: Mouse, Vole, Rabbit, Mole, Birds, eggs    APPROX SIZE: 8" ENEMIES: Fox, birds of prey

Also known as Kine, Weasel has a vicious bite and is related to Stoat, as well as Badger, Mink, Polecat, Otter, Pinemarten and Ferret. All are carnivorous, and many

have a bloodthirsty streak. Like Stoat, the Weasel has a light breast and under belly but he has a shorter tail with no black tip and is much smaller and indeed is Britains smallest carnivore.

It rests in burrows taken from other species or in crevices in walls but does not have permanent dens, except for breeding. Young are born from April to May and a litter numbers 4-6.

#### **ADDER**

HABITAT: Field, beach, wood      EATS: Lizards, Frog, Mouse Small Birds

APPROX SIZE: 24"    ENEMIES: Man, Crow, Gulls, Hedgehog, birds of prey

Britains only poisonous snake, Adders prefer dry habitats and hibernate from October to March/April. Adder is active throughout the day. Adder has reddish eyes and a black tongue which it uses to scent its prey. Adder tends to be pale grey with black markings but females are brownish in colour and tend to be larger than males.

Mating occurs in May or June and there are violent battles between males over females at this time. The young, born in egg sacks which break immediately, appear in August or September and number 5-15.

Adders use their tongues to scent their prey and are one of the few reptiles that are about for 24hours a day.

**Note:** When an Adder bite causes at least a 'scratch' (see Wound Results Table in Tooth & Claw section) any smaller or same sizes creature will die. Up to twice the size of the Adder the effect of the poison is to become very ill for the whole day, and all activity is at -3.

#### **GRASS SNAKE**

HABITAT: Wood, marsh, river bank, field      EATS: Frog, Toad, Newt      APPROX

SIZE: 48" ENEMIES: Stoat, Weasel, Rat

The Grass Snake is Britain's largest reptile. There are many different colours and the upper-side may be black-brown, grey, olive or reddish.

It prefers open woodland, grassland, hedgerows, marshy areas and along riverbanks and pondsides. Never far from water Grass snake is an excellent swimmer. It hibernates from October to April.

The Grass Snake does not eat the small mammals that are so important to Adders, sticking mainly to eating Frogs, Newts and Toads. It hunts mainly by day.

#### **KESTREL**

HABITAT: Field      EATS: Mice, Voles, small birds, beetles, worms

APPROX SIZE: 12-14"      ENEMIES: Man,

The Kestrel is the most common bird of prey over most of Britain. Its most frequent habit is that of hovering, as if hanging on a string, its wings beating rapidly or flickering lightly according to changes in the wind.

Kestrels have long slender wings and tail, and often hunt their prey by the side of the road (Hard River). They nest in old Crow's nests, in cavities in trees, barns or other buildings.

#### BADGER

HABITAT: Wood    EATS: Mouse, Vole, Frog, snail, Fruit, nuts, worms

APPROX SIZE: 26 - 32"    ENEMIES: Man

Badger is amongst the largest and most powerful of the creatures of The Wood. Badger has strong legs and claws as well as powerful jaws. It has a coat of stiff short hairs, which are whitish with a black bend behind the tip giving Badger a grey appearance. Badger has a white head with a black stripe over ear and eye.

Badger is essentially a nocturnal animal. He is cousin to Weasel, Stoat and Otter but prefers to eat 'easier' foodstuffs such as windfall apples worms and blackberries than do his more bloodthirsty relatives. Badger lives in a network of underground chambers and tunnels called a set and is a sociable creature tending to live in groups. Successive generations may continue to occupy and enlarge the set.

Mating takes place in spring, but the young are not born until the following year. The litter normally consists of up to four young.

Badger has many other names such as Grey-Pate, Bawsin, Brock and Baget.

#### DEER

HABITAT: wood    EATS: Grass, heather, moss    APPROX SIZE: 48"(at shoulder) ENEMIES: Man

Deer are herbivorous, and chewing animals related to cattle and sheep (though they will not thank you for reminding them of this). They need to eat large volumes of vegetation and whilst feeding are vulnerable to predators (although only Man remains as a hunter of Deer in Britain), so have the habit of eating quickly then retiring to the safety of thick cover, where food is regurgitated and eaten at leisure.

Most species of deer sport antlers, but only the male of the species. Dealt with here is the (native) Red Deer, but also native to Britain is the smaller Roe Deer. The stags (males) are at their most aggressive in the rutting season (September). Each stag will have a 'harem' of about 15 females.

Stag is the most noble of all creatures in TFTW. He is usually the Lord of The Wood, and most sensible creatures will take notice of what he says.

#### HARE

HABITAT: Mountain, Field    EATS: Grass, Leaves, Shoots    APPROX SIZE: 19-24" ENEMIES: Fox, Stoat

Hare is distinguished easily from Rabbit -it is larger, has longer rear legs, longer ears and does not burrow. Hare is much more solitary than Rabbit, and can often outrun or outmaneuver most predators. Hare has powerful back legs with which he can leap

astounding distances, or deliver nasty blows to would-be attackers. He also bites and scratches.

Mountain hares are smaller than their lowland counterparts and have shorter ears and legs. Mountain Hares have blue/grey fur tending towards white in winter, whereas brown Hares have (surprisingly) brown fur. Hare is also known as Puss, Sarah or Grass Cat.

Hare is mainly active at dusk and at night although sometimes in the he and his friends may gather in small groups during the daytime when the pre-mating 'boxing matches' and chases take place.

He breeds and shelters in a small surface scrape known as a 'form'. His young are called leverets. The Mountain Hare sometimes dig small burrows or take over old Rabbit warrens.

#### OTTER

HABITAT: Wooded river banks      EATS: Fish, Eel      APPROX      SIZE:      30"  
ENEMIES: Pike, Mink

The Otter is cousin to Badger as well as Stoat and Weasel. They have sleek streamlined bodies (excellent for swimming) and usually have brown fur. Their fur serves to trap air to their bodies when they dive below water to keep them warm.

In some cases, Otters live close to the sea, and swim as easily off the sea coast as do fresh water Otters inland (these Otters would have Beach Lore rather than River Lore).

Otters normally live solitary lives, apart from the breeding period, usually late winter or early spring. After a gestation period of 9 weeks 2-5 cubs are born and it is 2-3 months before they are able to swim.

Mink are alien to Britain, but having been introduced are becoming a pest, and certainly competition to Otters. Otters are able to track, using their whiskers to pick underwater vibrations.

#### OWL

HABITAT: Wood, Field, Farm      EATS: Mice, Voles, Moles, Frogs, Sparrows, Robins  
APPROX SIZE: 14-16"      ENEMIES: Larger birds of prey, Fox

Owls hunt at night (the Short Eared Owl does most of its hunting in daylight). Owl is an effective predator. It has excellent hearing, which it uses to follow its prey before striking.

Most Owls live in the woodland, but the Barn Owl tends to live in disused farm buildings (hence its name).

The Long Eared Owl tends to live in deeper woodland so that it can also range over the fields. The Short Eared Owl sometimes visits coastal marshes.

Other Owls are the Little Owl and probably the commonest Owl, the Tawny Owl.

## SWAN

HABITAT: Pond, Lake, River EATS: Waterplants  
ENEMIES: Pike

APPROX SIZE: 48 - 60"

The Mute Swan is native to Britain. Others migrate into Britain during winter months, from colder climates - Arctic Russia and Iceland, where they take residence on streams, rivers, ponds and lakes across the country.

They are extremely large white birds, that honk and hiss (if their size is not enough) to drive off intruders. They have orange and black, or yellow and black bills and are otherwise essentially white, although young have brown plumage at first.

They nest near water or in emergent vegetation and lay 5-7 large eggs in a huge pile of leaves, stems and roots.

## Frog's Tale

*Big Eyes peered into the gloom. He blinked, gulped and swam forward to where a few twigs and dead leaves floated on the surface of the water and relative safety. The marsh behind him was strangely silent as if all of the frogs he had left behind were listening for sounds of his progress. Up ahead the tall, dark silhouettes of the trees looked both minous and magniflant to the humble frog who had never been this close to them before.*

*Big Eyes watched for a moment and listened to the strange sounds emanating from the direction in which he had to travel. He had of course occassionally caught the louder cries and squeals that came across the Frogmarsh from The Wood but what he could hear from this close vantage point filled the poor frog with terror. He blinked and gulped involuntarily. He felt sick.*

*Big Eyes thought briefly about turning around and going back home. That however would be too easy and would be an admission of failure and cowardice. He would never gain anycreatures' respect and would never become Froglord - something he had always decided he would one day aspire to. Even the beautiful Greenrush would not look at him ever again if he gave up now and he wouldn't be able to bear the thought of her with any Frog other than himself. Holding onto these thought Big Eyes dived again into the still moonlit waters and with a soft splash and headed for the far bank.*

*The Pike was waiting patiently in the reeds at the edge of the pond. He knew that if he waited long enough somecreature would swim past and then it would be a simple matter of darting from his cover and opening his huge jaws. The Pike knew he was the master of the River and Pond.*

*"Aye, if I could walk I would also be the master of The Wood", he said to himself, a small stream of bubbles drifting away from his gills as he did so. The Pikes' massive mouth parted in what might pass for a grin amongst fish-kind as he pictured himself striding gloriously through the trees, all the creatures of The Wood cowering before him in fear. Even the Stag. Oh yes, he thought, especially the bloody Stag.*

*It was probably the fact that the Pike was not quite paying attention that saved Big Eyes' life. Frog didn't realize this himself, of course. He simply saw it that he had had a tussle*

*with the most terrifying creature that had ever lived and survived. Suffice to say that after much thrashing and foaming of water and several screams of fright Big Eyes the frog-hero dragged himself up the bank and flopped scared witless and exhausted onto the grass. Very soon he would become a Frog-Legend, if he could ever get his wobbly legs working again!*

*The Pike meanwhile, cursed himself inwardly for a fool, but then decided he hadn't fancied frog for supper anyway and settled back into the reeds, there to await another hapless swimmer-by, almost as quickly forgetting that the frog had ever existed.*

## ANIMAL DESIGN

There are many different species and varieties of animals, not touched upon in these rules. In particular amongst the bird kingdom there are hundreds of types of bird that either visit these shores or reside here - Magpies, Jackdaws, Cuckoos. Thrushes, Blackbirds, Starlings, Kingfishers, Woodpeckers, Tits, Herons, Hawks, Jays, Swallows, to name just a few.

It is impossible to print stats for every one in this game. All we have done is give the "flavour" of the game, and if other creatures are required, where no rules exist, then the following chapter is intended to be of help in the design of a set of stats for whatever creature you need in your campaign, using existing animals as a 'guide' and of course referring to appropriate reference works.

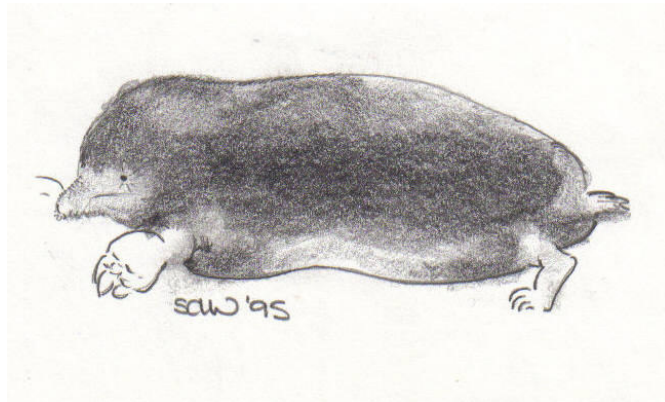
A player may particularly want to play his favourite creature, for instance a Bat, and provided the referee is happy to do so, then these rules will help in the design of the 'basic' creature.

Sometimes the Gamekeeper will require a specific animal for a scenario - a Wallaby for instance (which from escaped stock are now firmly established in parts of Britain) or an escaped pet hamster or guinea pig etc. One of the scenarios at the back of this book shows how a newly "designed" animal can be used for a specific scenario idea.

The first thing to do when designing the stats for any new animal is to read at least one good reference book about that particular animal (it is preferable to read more than one, as well as watching any nature programmes that are on TV about the animal). Make notes about the animal (especially its size, food, habitat, life-span, enemies etc). Once you have a good basic 'feel' for the animal compare what is said about it, to animals already described in these rules. You can use the animals in these rules as a good guide to the one you are designing.

Firstly compare the animal's actual size in inches to the following table (do not include the tail in the animal's length). The length of the animal will be an indicator of its sturdiness. Basically, the score derived from the table will give its sturdiness stat. However, if the animal is particularly noted for its tough pelt, or its resistance to toxins etc (like the Hedgehog) then add 1 to the basic sturdiness value.

Animal Size	Sturdiness
1-3"	1
4-6"	2
7-9"	3
10-12"	4
13-18"	5
19-24"	6
25-30"	7
31-36"	8
37-42"	9
43-48"	10
+6"	+1



Toughness starts at the same value as the creatures' (unmodified) Sturdiness. If the animal is noted for particularly powerful claws or limbs (such as Moles' foreparts), or can deliver horrendous bites, or has a strong 'stocky' build, then possibly add 1 to the basic starting point.

If the creature is not noted for being particularly powerful or has a weak build then the value may be reduced by 1. Toughness and Sturdiness will generally be within 1 point of each other. These attributes may be improved by up to half again of their initial starting values with points awarded by the GK after the successful completion of adventures. This represents growth of the animal beyond average size and general 'toughening' due to experience but not to unrealistic heights.

If a creature is small, it is likely to be nimble. If a creature is noted for its climbing ability (eg Squirrel) it again is likely to be nimble. The 'average' will be about 3. Many animals are recorded as being agile so be careful before making your creature into a super-nimble acrobat, only go above 3 if the creature is exceptionally so. Mouse has about the highest nimbleness at 5 so basic starting values will not normally be higher than this.

Craftiness is 1 for the smaller animals or herbivores etc. Carnivores tend to be more cunning as they have to catch wary prey. Animals that live longer also develop more cunning and are likely to have a greater Craftiness. Few animals exceed 3.

Viciousness, similarly tends to be greater amongst predators than amongst their prey. However some creatures can be particularly nasty fighters for their life or when defending their young. However here we are talking about viciousness in 'normal' situations. Viciousness is 1 amongst simple, often domesticated, animals (cattle, sheep etc) and 2 for other non-predators. 3 or higher is the level for hunters and killers. Alertness tends to be around 3 for most creatures. There tends to be the least variation in this attribute as predators need to be able to find, hear or scent their prey and animals near the lower end of the food chain need to be aware of hunters in the vicinity. A large number of creatures have a limited ability in one of their senses but invariably make up for the lack in having heightened ability in another sense, such as Mole who has poor eyesight but exceptional 'touch' (hairs on his sensitive nose).

Luckiness is given only to player creatures and starts at 1. Gnomes start with 2. The total points tends to be in the region 14-16 amongst player creatures

Something else to be wary of when creating a new basic creature is that reference works will often cite examples of animals performing extraordinary feats outside of what would seem typical for the creature in question. Treat such references with a degree of care and where the example quoted is clearly out of the ordinary then ignore it, or consider it more in the terms that this creature was no ordinary example - a player-creature perhaps?

#### EXAMPLE OF BASIC CREATURE DESIGN

A player is particularly keen to play a Bat character and has convinced the kind GK to allow her to play one since it is well within keeping with the game, and should be an easy one to integrate into the Tale. Reading some books about bats, the GK sees that there are rather a few species of bat in the world - about 900 in all. There are however only 18 types in Britain, and the following seems about standard.

Bat is a small flying mammal that lives on insects. Bat has virtually useless eyes, however this is more than made up for by 'sonar'. Bat relies upon sound impulses, which she emits and then detects the rebound with her expanded ears, after the sound waves bounce off an object. Bat has inferior flight to birds - the wing membrane does not repair well when damaged. Bat is also virtually useless when on the ground because she has had to sacrifice the use of her hind legs. She does however cling well onto vertical surfaces.

Bat is about the size of Mouse making her Sturdiness 1 (1 - 3" on the table). There is nothing to suggest Bat is particularly strong so Toughness is also 1 (indeed there are grounds for reducing Toughness, but nothing should start lower than 1). Nimbleness should be 2 as Bat is next to helpless on the ground, and not as agile as a bird in flight. As a predator (albeit of insects) Craftiness is 2, and equally her Viciousness should be 2. Bat does however have an excellent Alertness with her sonar and expanded ears so there are certainly grounds for giving her a 4 in Alertness. Luckiness is 1 bringing the attribute total up to 14 which is OK for a PC

As regards abilities, Bat naturally gets Fly and any Lore. Track (using sonar) becomes the last ability of Bat, making her a well rounded creature fit for adventure once the player has spent 5 points to increase attributes or buy a new ability.



## THREE TALES FROM THE WOOD

### 1) Tale from the Riverbank

This adventure follows a fairly simple and linear plot to ease the GK into the art of running adventures in TFTW in an easy manner. Some experienced GKs will throw in some deviations from the basic plot line but other less experienced GKs will want to keep things simple and will 'steer' their players back on course if they wander outside of the plot as is written.



#### Setting the scene:

Redflank, the Lord Stag has called a meeting of the creatures of The Wood in Stone Clearing by crashing his mighty antlers against the Meeting Stone.

Lordly representatives of all of the animals of The Wood are present - Fox, Mouse, Weasel, Squirrel, Badger, Rat, Otter, Vole, Crow and all the rest. The Truce is of course in force so all of the creatures are safe until the sun rises in the morning for it is now night-time. Redflank brings the excited chatterings to a close with one further crash of his powerful antlers.

When all is quiet he begins. "You will all no doubt be aware that over the last few weeks the level of water in the stream which feeds The Wood has been falling."

There are a few nods and worried glances at this point especially from Sleek the Otter Lord and Wash the Lord of Water Voles.

"Well, the water in the stream is now down to a mere trickle. I went there to take a look myself only this dusk-time, at the request of Sleek, and I have to report that the signs are not good. Certainly it is my view that if something is not done about this worrying situation shortly the balance will be upset and The Wood will suffer"

Redflank waits until the uproar subsides and then continues. "What we need is a volunteer or two to investigate the problem. It will no doubt mean a long and hazardous journey upstream across the Hard River (a few horrified gasps from some of the creatures at this point) and further afield than many of you will have ventured before. WHO WILL GO?"

At the last three words the PC's will feel Redflank's eyes boring into them as other creatures cringe away from his gaze. Once the PC's have Volunteered' the remaining creatures will shout "Hoorah!" in relief that some creature other than themselves' is

going and then disappear into the undergrowth or the branches of the trees around the clearing.

Redflank will then wish the PC's luck, and advise them to go as soon as possible, and that when they get to the Hardriver they should cross quickly and stop for nothing even if they feel the eyes of the Roaring Owl burning into them.

### **Day/Night 1:**

(Note: It is assumed that during the course of this adventure the PC's will stop frequently for rests and naps and to forage for appropriate foodstuffs).

The PC's will presumably head straight for the Riverbank which they will see is down to a very worrying trickle in the midst of dried-up muddy banks, revealing dead fish, bits of washed up twigs and some Man-things, which both look and smell of The Bane albeit only very slightly.

If the GK is feeling really mean he or she could throw in a tense moment as a Fox or pack of Rats approaches the PC's and taunts them a little. However The Truce is still in force so there is little for them to worry about at the moment although the GK could remind the players that it is very nearly dawn by now.

Following the course of the water upstream the PC's will reach the Hardriver late in the day. Those with 'Man-lore' will begin to recognize the strange and rather horrid smell as they approach. Others will begin to feel uncomfortable and more than a little intimidated by it. Those that have been stuffing their faces a lot during the day may feel sick.

Nosing around the area the PC's may notice that the stream actually goes under the Hard River through a kind of tunnel. Any with River Lore will realize that in this tunnel is the home of an old and surly Otter called Chaser. So the PC's are faced with a choice here. They could cross the dreaded Hardriver, or they could try the tunnel underneath and risk upsetting a large ferocious creature.

If they choose to cross the Hard River the GK should describe the 'unnaturalness' of the ground, and the 'decaying' feel to the grass and weeds growing at its edge. If they nibble any vegetation nearby it will taste foul.

Once onto the cold surface of the Hard River they will feel open and vulnerable. There is no cover and anycreature used to being able to burrow to escape predators will be most anxious that they cannot even scratch the surface of this terrible place. As they cross the ground will begin to rumble and a loud horrendous noise will fill the air as around the bend in the distance comes the terrible Roaring Owl. If the PC's cross individually, roll randomly for which one is crossing when the car comes.

It is dusk and so the eyes are burning brightly from the Roaring Owl. Play up the sounds, the tremendous vibrations underpaw and the wicked stench. The car is intimidating (7) and opposed intimidation rolls are called for. If the PC's win (unlikely) they will safely speed across. If they lose they will stand still in abject

terror as the Roaring Owl bears down on them. PCs with Man Lore may add +2 to their dice rolls, as they will be more aware of these things.

The car has a 1 in 6 chance of hitting any PC standing still. Using a point of Luckiness will save any unfortunate creature about to be squashed.

If the players choose to go through the tunnel (under the bridge) they will most likely meet the Otter. As expected he is not in a good mood. The main reason this dusk for his surliness is that there is insufficient water left in the River for him to have a good swim or to catch any decent fish. He is therefore hungry and might be tempted by a small mouse or a frog or something.

PCs should have a chance of getting to the bottom of his problem by talking and role-play and certainly those with River Lore will have a good idea why he is in an even worse mood than usual. If they explain their quest to Chaser he will let them have passage, but if they upset him even more he will not let them pass.

#### CHASER THE OTTER

To	St	Ni	Cr	Vi	Al	Abilities
6	7	3	2	3	3	Riverlore, Swim, Track, Tooth & claw

#### Day/Night 2

The next day, the PCs will mainly be traversing open fields and meadows. By the Riverbank there will be enough cover to hide themselves in so they would be better off staying close to it.

The day will be largely uneventful but late on a nosey sparrow called Chitter will spot them and fly down and start to ask annoying questions. She will flit about their heads in an excited fashion and ask "Where are you all going?" "What are a strange mixture of creatures like you doing traveling together?" "Where have you come from?" and "That's a long way isn't it?" etc, etc. The PC's would be best not to tell this talkative Sparrow of their quest or it may spell trouble later. Indeed they would probably do well to scare her off altogether.

#### CHITTER THE SPARROW

To	St	Ni	Cr	Vi	Al	Abilities
1	2	3	2	3	4	Field Lore, Wood Lore, Fly

At dusk or nightfall, there will be an altogether more dangerous encounter with Flick the Adder. He is hungry and on the hunt for easy prey. One of the PC's may well seem like easy prey.

Flick is not daft and he will wait until one of the PC's is alone, which is bound to happen at this point as they are all likely to have different eating and sleeping habits. Whilst Flick is lurking, give the PC a chance to sense his prescence before he strikes. Flick will first of all try to intimidate the PC but will then go for the kill. Other PC's nearby might hear some noises (Roll Awareness vs Moderate on the Task Difficulty Table) and (hopefully) come to investigate.

Flick will not go after a Hedgehog if there is one in the group, and if a Hedgehog comes to the aid of the attacked PC, Flick probably will not hang around. He may make a few choice and sly remarks before he slinks off though. Either way a concerted show of strength by the PC's or a 'buffet' result in Tooth & Claw will be enough to see off this mean old snake.

#### FLICK THE ADDER

To	St	Ni	Cr	Vi	Al
<b>Abilities</b>					
2	4	3	3	3	3
Hide, Intimidate, Field Lore, Tooth & Claw					

#### Day/Night 3

Early in the morning as the PC's continue their journey they will spot dark shapes in the line of trees edging the field ahead. They have come across a rookery of about 50 birds. Most are asleep and not too bothered by the approaching creatures. However a few of them, namely Blackhood, Darkbeak, Beadeye and Ragwing are looking for a bit of excitement and these approaching creatures look like easy meat to the Rooks. The GK could have the PC's make 'Hard' Awareness rolls to spot the fact that 4 of the rooks have noticed them and are only pretending to be asleep.



The rooks will swoop down upon the PC's and attempt to peck, harass and bully them. They conform to standard rook characteristics.

If the PC's are strong enough (if for example they have a Hedgehog in their midst, or if they collectively have reasonably high Toughness, Sturdiness and some have Tooth & Claw ability) then the GK could allow this to develop into a fight. If the PC's are smaller and weaker then the GK should allow another escape, perhaps letting them spot a thorny bush to hide under or a hole for them to escape into. Even Chaser the Otter could turn up and scare the Rooks away if they are getting the better of the PC's.

This is a potentially dangerous encounter and the GK should be prepared to let PC's use Luckiness points and to listen to any reasonable suggestions from the players as otherwise they may not survive.

Toward the late afternoon, the PC's will begin to encounter an evil stench and this will become stronger the more they press on. It smells of The Bane, of Harddrivers, of Roaring Owls and of Man. Beneath it all is another faintly recognisable smell (Hard Awareness roll to discern that the smell is of Rat).

Looking ahead the PC's can now see that the ground has all been churned up as if the Mother of all Moles has been digging here. Amidst all of this churned earth are bits of shiny stuff and twigless branches stuck in the ground and other indescribable objects scattered around. Those with Man-Lore will recognise the fences and signposts as

ways of keeping Men out (or in!) and the shiny things as cans and bottles (sometimes with nice sticky-sweet-watery-nectary stuff in them) and other bits of Man rubbish.

As the PC's approach they will see that there is a vast pool of water spreading over the churned up ground in the middle of the site, turning everything to mud and muck. Out of the pool or lake of water comes just a trickle of water down the streambed. It is now easy to see that some of the larger Man things are lying in the stream blocking off the flow of water.

## **The Finale**

As the PC's get closer and continue to ponder what can be done, a group of Rats will approach them from all sides, from tunnels and hidey holes and from behind mounds and Man litter. Blacktooth, who is Lord Rats' henchrat will be at their head.

Blacktooth will begin to question the PC's aggressively trying to intimidate them at the same time. Any PC's that are not intimidated (or intimidate back) will cause Blacktooth to be agitated as he is not used to this. He is certainly not used to being questioned himself, and will show clearly his agitation if this happens.

Blacktooth is aspiring to be Lord Rat but he is painfully aware that he is too weak to challenge the current occupier of that position. He may see the PC's as a way to shortcut his challenge for the leadership especially if there is a tough looking Hedgehog in their group. It really all depends on the PC's and how they approach the conversation with Blacktooth.

Essentially this is a great point for the PC's to really role play their characters. There is a vast network of tunnels in and around the site. There are about 100 or more Rats in the colony. Whilst the Rats have no real reason to kill the PC's they could easily do so, so there is always an element of danger in any negotiations. Indeed Lord Rat is very keen to learn about The Wood and its inhabitants and so any deal he makes could involve The Wood in some way.

The Rats in the colony have average attributes and abilities except for the following:-

### **LORD RAT (SNAKETAIL)**

**To St Ni Cr Vi Al**

5 6 3 2 3 3

#### **Abilities**

Intimidate, Climb, Man Lore, Tunnel Lore, Tooth & Claw

Snaketail is now quite a venerable Rat who has had a long life and fought hard. He really doesn't want any more problems that give him a hard life and knows that one of his subordinates is looking eagerly at his throne. He would appreciate some help in determining



which one of his HENCHRATS it is and flushing him out. He shouldn't need any help defeating his opponent though!

#### **HENCHRAT (BLACKTOOTH)**

<b>To</b>	<b>St</b>	<b>Ni</b>	<b>Cr</b>	<b>Vi</b>	<b>Al</b>	<b>ABILITIES</b>
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4	5	3	3	3	3	Man Lore, Climb, Tooth & Claw, Tunnel Lore
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Blacktooth is a very sneaky Rat, who is not above using devious means to further his own ambitions and progress in the Rat-world. He has a group of about 5 rats who are dedicated to his cause and another 8 or so who would be ready to side with him but are less fanatical.

#### **HENCHRAT(REDEYE)**

<b>To</b>	<b>St</b>	<b>Ni</b>	<b>Cr</b>	<b>Vi</b>	<b>Al</b>	<b>Abilities</b>
-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	------------------

4	5	3	2	3	3	Man Lore, Climb, Tooth & Claw, Tunnel Lore
---	---	---	---	---	---	--

Redeye has acquired rather a taste for alcohol and constantly searches the site for cans with drops of beer left in them. Since his problem started his eyes have reddened (hence his name) and his desire to be the leader of the Rat colony has lessened. He could probably only be certain of calling upon help from one or two old friends if needed but could be a useful ally if he could be sobered up for a while.

#### **HENCHRAT(GREYFUR)**

<b>To</b>	<b>St</b>	<b>Ni</b>	<b>Cr</b>	<b>Vi</b>	<b>Al</b>	<b>Abilities</b>
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4	5	3	2	3	3	Man Lore, Climb, Tooth & Claw, Tunnel Lore
---	---	---	---	---	---	--

Greyfur is a young rat but possibly destined for great things and favoured by Snaketail. He has several strong allies amongst the rats in the colony and is not satisfied to continue living on this site, but rather fancies sending scouting parties to look for another place to live. If he hears of The Wood he will want to learn all he can with a view to taking as many rats as he can to establish themselves there.

The rat colony has obviously been founded on a building site on which little work has been done for a while (the developers are running into monetary difficulties).

The PC's should try to find a way to get the rats in the colony to help them move the barrels that are blocking the free flow of the water in the stream. To do this they will require the help of the large proportion of the rats in the colony. It would of course be best if they didn't compromise the position of The Wood in the process.

If the PC's successfully negotiate with the rats to help move the barrels the results will be immediate and the whole mood of The Wood will have been lifted by the time they get back. The PC's will also be seen as Heroes for a few days by the inhabitants of The Wood.

### **The Conclusion**

The GK can award some points to be spent by the players on their creatures to improve their attributes or to buy new abilities. It is recommended that between 3 and 5 points be awarded to the players for total success, or 1 to 3 points for a less than

successful adventure. For exceptional role-play the GK could award individual players an extra point.

The GK could always use this scenario as a way to introduce the next adventure - perhaps the Rat Lord had a task for the PCs to carry out in exchange for his help in moving the barrels and debris blocking the flow of the River, perhaps Greyfur heard about The Wood and decides to follow the PCs back and then starts to cause trouble in The Wood, or maybe one of the PCs becomes addicted, like Redeye, to the Man-Nectar and would even go off on his own to the lands of Man to find more. There are many possibilities.

## **2). Wolfs Bane**

The premise of his tale is that a Wolf has recently escaped from the local zoo and has made its way to The Wood. Maybe one or two of the pc's will see this huge shaggy beast loping through the trees. Maybe some-creature else will spot a carcass of one of Redflank's herd of Deer (and there are no animals in The Wood big enough to bring down a deer! Several of the smaller creatures will be scared out of their wits and The Wood is under a palpable pall of doom.

Some nights there is a terrific howling through the area sending shivers down the spines of many a creature – even so that badgers and foxes are scared.

Some-creature has to end this reign of terror. Nobody knows what the monster is except the following, who have their own ideas

Owl – using Wisdom, the Owl Lord learns that this is a 'Wolf' from a place far off across the sea. He also states that many years ago, in the dim-distant past, Wolves ruled The Wood, but that their enemies were the cunning foxes of those long gone days.

Fox – using Wood Lore (a formidable roll for the most information) the Fox Lord will recall ancient tales passed down through generations of foxes, that in bygone times Wolves and Foxes used to battle for supremacy. Foxes had numbers and cunning, Wolves had strength and size. When fox cunning had all but wrested The Wood from the Wolves, there was a strong Wolf Lord who came down from the far North. However, cunning Reynard, Lord of Foxes, used the mythical 'Sea-Onion' to rid the Wood of Greysnout, The Last Wolf.

Gnome – The long-lived Gnomes, though forgetful may recall the Tale of the fight between Reynard and Greysnout. He may remember a sea plant that made a smell that was unpleasant to Wolf-kind and made them go away.

Few creatures in The Wood know of the 'Sea'. Any with Beach Lore will. Those with River Lore may do (Hard roll). However, birds fly far and wide. If the pc's re-visit the Owl, it will not be there. If they wait for it, it will come back some time but is hungry and a bit aggressive – small creatures beware!

The other birds that fly far and wide are the Rooks, who live in the Rookery upstream. A visit to them may prove fruitful.

Pc's may come up with other ways to discover where the Sea is. Don't make this too difficult – you want them to head there after all – its where the adventure is at!

## **Encounters**

Along the way, following the river to the Sea, pc's will have the following encounters. How you and your players deal with them is largely up to you and how you like to role-play.



**A Fisherman** – Any-creature interested in grubs and maggots (Mole, Shrew and Hedgehog especially ) will love the small box by the side of the river that is just full of really lovely juicy ones. What the fisherman does if he sees them is up to you.

**Water Voles** – some feisty Water Voles (one for each pc there – use standard Vole stats) who tell the pc's to go around their territory – however they are either easily intimidated or ready to flee if involved in a serious tussle.

**Little Boys** – a gang of boys with a homemade raft-boat. They float around on it a bit then they pull it ashore and run off home for dinner (or whatever). Pc's could possibly use this to continue their journey – especially if there is a Gnome amongst them.

**The Town** – a particularly nasty area, where it smells and the water tastes foul. Anycreature with Man Lore knows this place for what it is. Others find it foul and intimidating. If you are really mean you could set up an encounter with a small dog or cat.

**Sand Dunes** – not far beyond the town are the sand dunes, that lead on down to the beach. Amongst the dunes lurks an Adder. Use standard Adder stats.

**Beach Crab** – This could be a strange meeting. The crab is being harassed by a Seagull who is trying to turn him over. The crab is scuttling this way and that trying to get away. If the pc's are brave enough they could make the Seagull fly away, for easier prey. The Crab, called Pinchme, will be grateful to pc's if they save him from harassment and will help them find what they are looking for.

The Sea Onion, is a form of Sea Kelp, with a very strange smell. Even the pc's don't like it much. This needs to be taken back to The Wood. Because the Sea Kelp smells so bad, animals encountered on the way here will keep away.

How the pc's then deal with the Wolf is up to you. The Wolf does not like the smell of the Sea Kelp, so if they have enough of it, they could for example place it at strategic points around The Wood, or go to the Wolf's Den and put it in there. They might even want to talk to the Wolf and tell him there is more where that came from. Let anything that sound reasonable work.

## Creatures

Pinchme

To	St	Ni	Cr	Vi	Al	Abilities
3	3	2	1	3	2	Beach Lore, Tooth & Claw, Swim, Pincers +2 To, Shell +3 St.

Lupus The Wolf

To	St	Ni	Cr	Vi	Al	Abilities
10	10	3	2	5	3	Tooth & Claw, Track, Man Lore.

## CREDITS

**Tales from the Wood** was created by Simon Washbourne & Mark George.

**Artwork** for the game was provided by Simon Washbourne & Helen Roberts.

**Playtesters:** Nigel Uzzell, Janine Uzzell, Alyson George, Robert Watkins, Gary Collett, Leigh Wakefield, Phil Chivers and Phil Ratcliffe.

**Recommended Reading:** All of the 'Duncton Wood' (moles) books by William Horwood, Hunters Moon (foxes) and Frost Dancers (hares) by Gerry Kilworth, Marshworld, Witchwood & Dragon Pond (weasels) by A.R. Lloyd, Little Grey Men (gnomes) by B.B., Pork (hedgehogs and others) by Chris Freddie, The Silver Tide, The Second Wave & The Golden Flight (squirrels) by Michael Tod, Watership Down (rabbits) by Richard Adams, The Farthing Wood (all animals) books by Colin Dann. Any good natural history books would also be highly useful.

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# ***Tales from the Wood***

Character Sheet

## ***Creature of 'The Way'***

Creature Name \_\_\_\_\_

Creatures Species \_\_\_\_\_

Creature Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Creature Attributes

Toughness \_\_\_\_\_

Abilities

Sturdiness \_\_\_\_\_

Nimbleness \_\_\_\_\_

Lores

Craftiness \_\_\_\_\_

Viciousness \_\_\_\_\_

Alertness \_\_\_\_\_

Gnome Skills\*

Luckiness \_\_\_\_\_

Wound Status

Unspent points