

AVIAN BIOLOGY

Description

The average avian is slightly taller and slimmer than a typical human. Plumage colouration is particularly varied, and these colours and patterns are an important secondary sexual characteristic. Display of this plumage is an integral part of courtship ritual, which also involves gift-giving that parallels the hospitality of the Rukhi culture. Indeed, from a biological perspective, the Rukhi culture of hospitality is an extension of the primitive invitation to mate, and their skill with jewellery an extension of the first male avians' stone-piled offerings.

Monogamy is not the norm in avian cultures, except in Alkyon - but even here couples do not necessarily show the same close partnership behaviour observed in humans. Marriages tend to be based on political and economic grounds, and affluent avians are expected to support multiple partners in many areas. The main avian breeding season runs from March through to June, when the avians' food supply is most plentiful. Male avians can reach sexual maturity at just twelve years old, and females can lay their first eggs at a similar age. The egg is laid approximately three weeks after mating has taken place. There is significant variation but all avians look quite different from humans. For example, every avian has a beak as well as feathers that cover the entire body.

The egg has a smooth, thin, white or greenish-white shell and is about twelve inches long and eight inches in diameter. The large egg contains a massive yolk, that provides a bounty of nourishment for the newly hatched chick, which can feed off the yolk for the few days of its life. Although enormous, the egg is laid quickly and the female's work is then done. A female avian can lay up to a dozen eggs in her lifetime.

In primitive times, she would have left to feed and hunt, and the male would have taken over incubating the egg. In more modern days, the successful avian will hire servants to incubate for him. It is not unknown for more complex partnerships to develop in areas of high population density. Some avians breed in stable groups and in these cases not only do the breeding male and female incubate, but some of the helpers also share in incubation. Such triple, quadruple, or higher multiple relationships can be just as stable as that of a single pair.

Avians invest a lot of energy in incubating their eggs. After a six month incubation period, the hatching itself can take up to three days. In less civilized days, the parent used to eat the discarded egg, but such behaviour is now viewed as barbaric. After two or three days, when the yolk has been digested, the juvenile avian is ready to eat the same food as its parents.

The avian diet is typically vegetarian, with seeds and pulses providing the bulk of the protein. Avians tend to steer clear of dairy produce. Some avians do eat meat and fish, but only in small quantities to supplement a diet largely comprised of vegetable matter. Food is often highly flavoured to disguise the blandness of basic ingredients, with herbs and spices being used in abundance.

Although avians are physically compatible with all other bipedal races of the Known World, their slighter build makes long term interracial partnerships physically problematical. They are not physically compatible with ophidians, myrmidons and dragons. All interracial relationships are sterile.

Racial rules

- You should not pass these rules on to other players

Please note that the following rules have not been released to the general player base and are only given to those players playing, or intending to play, avian characters. The Maelstrom campaign is enhanced if players are able to discover information about the game through purely IC sources so we ask players not to pass these sheets to other players. We believe that some of the advantages available to you will be lost if these rules become widely known.

Jack-of-all-trades

- You can identify precious metals and gems

All avian primary characters begin with the ability to recognize precious metals and gems, wood and metal work, even if they have no ability to work these materials. You will be given a personalized lore sheet at each event to enable you to use this ability.

This ability is only available to primary avian characters and their retainers. Secondary characters do not receive this benefit.

Direction Sense

- You are able to explore more quickly if you have the explorer skill
- You are able to navigate a ship more effectively if you have the navigator skill

All avian primary characters have a heightened sense of direction and awareness. This makes them more effective navigators and explorers than other characters. If you have the explorer skill then you can explore areas of the New World in downtime more quickly than an equivalent character. If you have the navigator skill then any ship will travel more quickly while you navigate it.

This ability is only available to primary avian characters and their retainers. Secondary characters do not receive this benefit.