GURPS®
ICE AGE

Roleplaying in the Prehistoric World

By Kirk Wilson Tate

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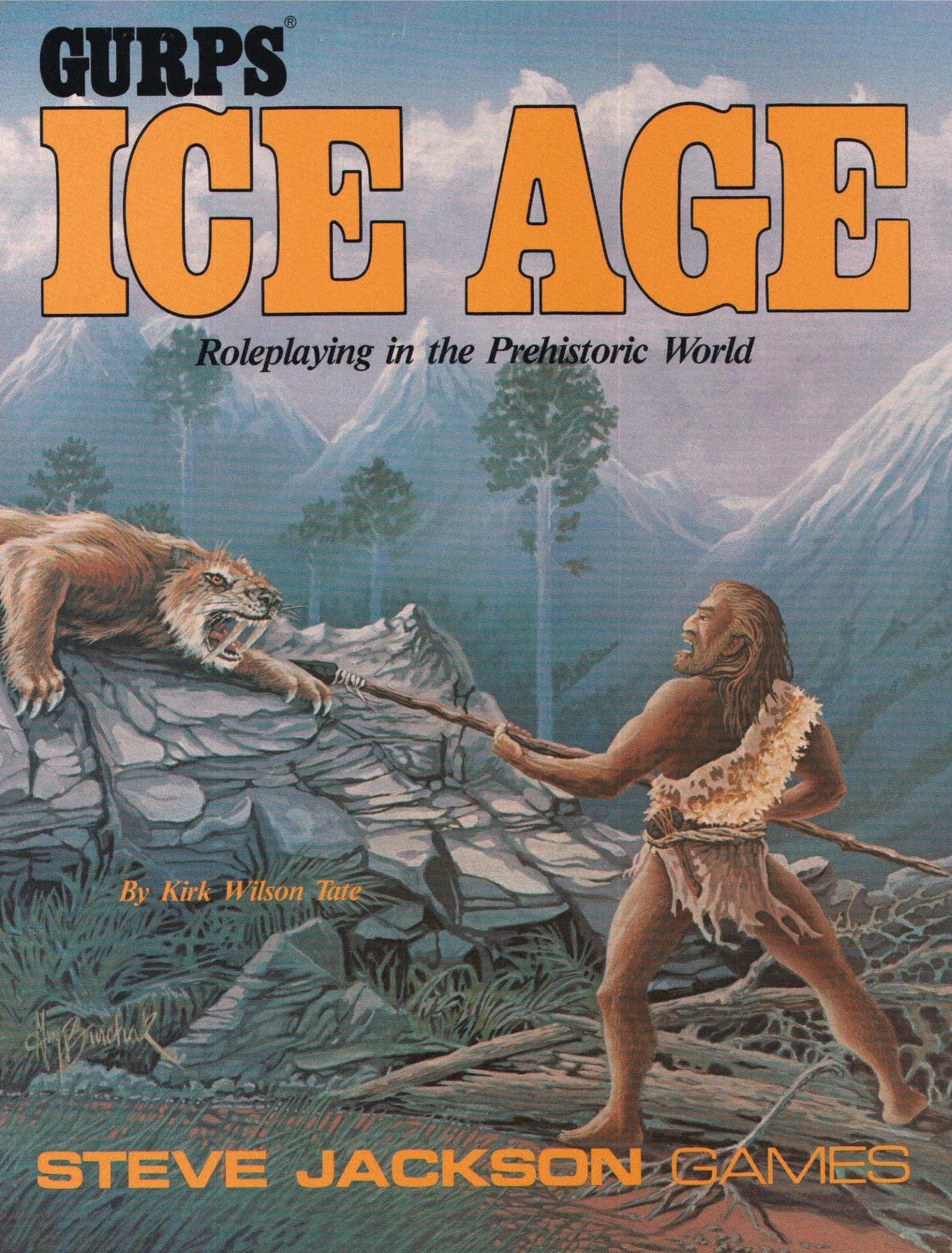
A WORLD OF DANGER

You're in the Ice Age, where mankind battles for survival. The weather is harsh. Gigantic beasts, and your own savage cousins, surround you on every side. You have no Uzis or bullet-proof vests, no automobiles, no penicillin, not even as much as a match (or a Fire spell). You have only your wits and the weapons you can make by hand.

Can you survive?

Included in this **GURPS** worldbook are:

An overview of the Pleistocene Epoch, the dawn of mankind.

Detailed information on seven hominid races — *Australopithecus gracilis, Australopithecus robustus, Homo habilis, Homo erectus*, archaic *Homo sapiens*, Neanderthal man and our own direct ancestor, Cro-Magnon man.

Character creation and roleplaying for all races, including new advantages, disadvantages and skills.

A system of primitive magic — Shamanism — with its own new spells.

A bestiary of Ice Age animals — including dinosaurs, for a "lost world" adventure.

A complete adventure pitting Neanderthal tribesfolk against Cro-Magnon invaders.

Ice Age can be used in many ways, for many types of campaigns:

A full background for a realistic or romanticized prehistoric campaign.

A guide for primitive tribes in a post-holocaust campaign.

A sourcebook for a lost realm in a pulp or adventure campaign.

A location for a time travel campaign.

A "primitive world" for an outer-space adventure.

Or, for a change of pace, try caveman slapstick, with dinosaurs, giant bugs, big clubs and ancient astronauts!

This book is designed for use with the **GURPS Basic Set,** Third Edition, but can be used as a sourcebook for any other roleplaying game system.

Written by Kirk Wilson Tate
Edited by Sharleen Lambard
Cover by Guy Burchak

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GURPS® Ice Age

Roleplaying in the Prehistoric World
A Generic Universal RolePlaying System Worldbook

By Kirk Wilson Tate
Edited by Sharleen Lambard, with assistance from Mike Hurst and Steve Jackson
Cover Art by Guy Burchak; Interior Art by Donna Barr

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INTRODUCTION

GURPS Ice Age is a supplement designed to provide everything you need to roleplay in the world of early man. Here you will find detailed rules for building characters of any species from man's family tree. There are new skills, advantages and disadvantages, and a magic system to simulate shamanism and primitive spiritualism.

You will also find suggestions for setting up campaigns in the stone-age world, as well as "lost worlds," time travel and slapstick campaigns. The *Bestiary* chapter details a selection of Ice-age fauna for use in encounters as opponents and prey. Finally, there is an adventure for beginning characters to help you get the "feel" of roleplaying cavemen.

Ice Age is oriented primarily towards Europe during the Pleistocene Epoch, which began about one million years ago. This is the world of the classic cavemen, Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon. There is also more archaeological evidence from this period and region than any other, especially for the last 200,000 years. The giant ice flows which shaped the entire ecosystem of most of the northern hemisphere had virtually no effect south of the Mediterranean.

Despite the European emphasis, GURPS Ice Age allows gaming in any period of hominid history. All of the species of genus *Homo* are discussed in detail, and there are even rules for making characters from the genus *Australopithecus*. A few animals of the African savanna are described as well.

The information provided in this book was gleaned from a wide variety of books and periodicals. The field of anthropology is a rapidly changing one — due to the development of new technologies. Wherever possible the most current and widely accepted view is presented. This does not mean that it is necessarily *right*, and it may someday be proven wrong. The final consideration in any matter, of course, is playability. If a certain theory didn't, in this author's opinion, make for good gaming, it was changed or omitted.

— *Kirk Tate*

About the Author

GURPS Ice Age is author Kirk Tate's first professional effort. He has been a roleplayer and GM for over ten years and a wargamer for more years than he cares to recall. He has contributed to *Roleplayer* magazine and playtested both *Illuminati* and the *GURPS Basic Set*. His GM credits include Hexworld at Origins '85 and other Texas conventions. With partner in crime J. David George, he designed and ran a solo roleplaying adventure at Texcon.

Kirk holds a B.A. in history from the University of Texas where his tastes ran from ancient Greece to modern Mexico. In addition to gaming, his interests include rugby and science fiction and fantasy literature. He is currently the GM-by-default of an ongoing fantasy campaign, as none of his friends want the job. Kirk resides in Austin, TX., with his wife and an incredibly ugly couch.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957-A, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Roleplayer. This bimonthly newsletter includes questions and answers, new races, rules, beasts, information on upcoming releases, and more. Please write for current subscription information.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Nobody's perfect — but when we make a mistake, we admit it. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

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HOMINID RACES

Character Creation

This section contains specific information about the various hominid races that flourished during the Ice Age — including social structure, technology, culture, religion and physical characteristics — everything the player needs to create a single character or an entire tribe. Which hominid species are acceptable as player character races will depend on the time and type of campaign. Check *with your GM before you begin building your character.*

PCs for *Ice Age* campaigns should be built on 100 points. Some hominids have natural advantages or limitations which are inherent to the species. These advantages and disadvantages are figured into the point cost for being a member of that race. Such automatic disadvantages and limitations do not count against the 40-point limit for a PC (see p. B26).

Some skills and advantages are forbidden to certain races — they simply aren't advanced enough. These are listed in the race descriptions. Other skills and advantages aren't available to *any* Ice Age characters; these are listed in the *Characters* chapter. Any skill, tool or cultural development discussed in the text on one race may be presumed to be available or in existence for all subsequent races.

Character stats for all the hominid races are summarized on p. 63.

H. habilis Height and Weight Table

This table works just like the table for humans on p. B13. Height is determined by ST; weight is based on height.

ST	Height	Weight
4 or below	4'8"	90 lbs.
5	4'9"	95 lbs.
6	4'10"	100 lbs.
7	4'11"	105 lbs.
8	4'11"	105 lbs.
9	5'	110 lbs.
10	5'	110 lbs.
11	5'1"	115 lbs.
12	5'1"	115 lbs.
13	5'2"	120 lbs.
14	5'3"	125 lbs.
15 or above	5'4"	130 lbs.
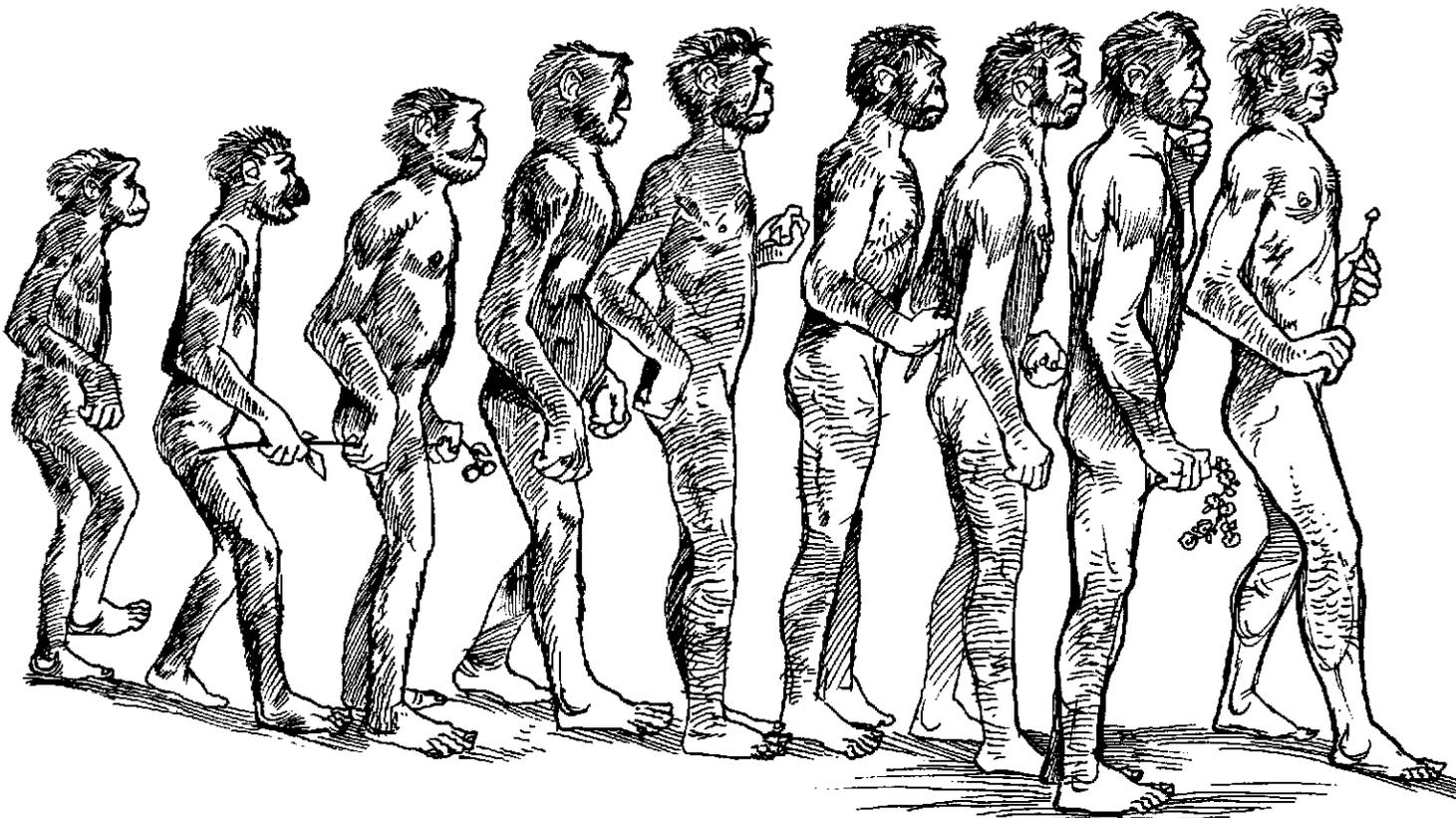
SHAMANISM AND MAGIC

A "shaman" is a wizard from a primitive society. This chapter will discuss Ice Age shamans and give a rationale behind their powers, along with a set of shamanistic spells. Although magic is not a required element of an *Ice Age* campaign, it adds color and dramatically increases roleplaying possibilities.

Shamanism

The shaman is the scientist, priest and doctor of early human society. He alone truly understands how the world works — the spiritual forces behind such phenomena as seasons, animal behavior, death and disease. This understanding is derived from the shaman's unique ability to contact and influence the spirit world. Though a shaman must have inborn ability, most learn their trade and spells from another shaman. Shamanism is an *art*, requiring skills and knowledge, both magical and mundane, which are the exclusive domain of the practitioners. Theology, in an Ice Age campaign, is the professional skill of the shaman.

Most shamans ply their trade for personal benefit, to be sure, but for the good of the tribe as well. Evil shamans do exist, but they are hated and feared, and must either hide their activities or live as outcasts.

GM-ing Shamanism

Shamanism adds a whole new dimension to roleplaying in the Pleistocene world. The GM of an *Ice Age* campaign which incorporates shamanism will need to be both creative and flexible. He will often be called upon to improvise, creating and describing visions of spirits and the spirit world. Shamans may interact with these spirits to achieve things impossible for normal men. Good players will come up with unexpected uses for the spells listed, and ideas for new spells.

The general rule: Preserve game balance, but make it fun. You can't allow any spell use that short-circuits the whole adventure. But, as much as possible, you should reward creative use of spells.

A GM is not required, however, to use the magic system just because he wants to have shamanism in his campaign. With only one or two exceptions, the spells listed are of an inherently ambiguous nature. The characters could conceivably use them without ever knowing if they really work. The GM need merely make all the die rolls in secret, and then tell the players what their characters perceive. They need not know if the vision of the shaman was real or simply a hallucination brought on by exhaustion. Similarly, a player won't know for sure if his character is blessed, since he can't tell if that arrow should have hit him in the heart, and not the arm. But remember, the *characters* will believe without question that magic works and spirits exist.

Shamanism and Magic

5 BESTIARY

Most of the following descriptions originally appeared in *GURPS Bestiary*, written by Steffan O'Sullivan. Some have been edited, expanded or slightly altered to tailor them to the specific requirements of this book. For more information on these and many other creatures, *GURPS Bestiary* is highly recommended.

For those who want a thoroughly non-historical campaign, a selection of dinosaur statistics are provided on pp. 42-43.

Animal Descriptions

Where detailed descriptions of animals are given, they follow the format of the *GURPS Bestiary*. Most of the headings are self-explanatory. Size refers to size in hexes. Habitats are abbreviated as follows:

A = Arctic
D = Desert, including all dry areas and scrub woodlands
F = Forest, including all temperate forests
FW = Fresh-Water Aquatic
J = Jungle, including any tropical forest
M = Mountain
P = Plains, including all grassland, steppes and so on
S = Swamp
Sub = Subterranean
SW = Salt-Water Aquatic

* means a special ability or attack — see text
✝ indicates exceptions to the given entry — see text
- means that the heading does not apply.

Pleistocene Europe

Aurochs

ST: 48-60	Speed/Dodge: 8/4	Size: 3
DX: 9	PD/DR: 1/1	Wt: 1,000-2,500 lbs.
IQ: 4	Damage: 1d+2 imp✝	Habitats: P, F
HT: 13-16	Reach: C	

The aurochs was the ancestor of modern domestic cattle. Well-known by primitive humans, it was hunted and domesticated extensively. By medieval times, it had become rare, and has been extinct since the 17th century.
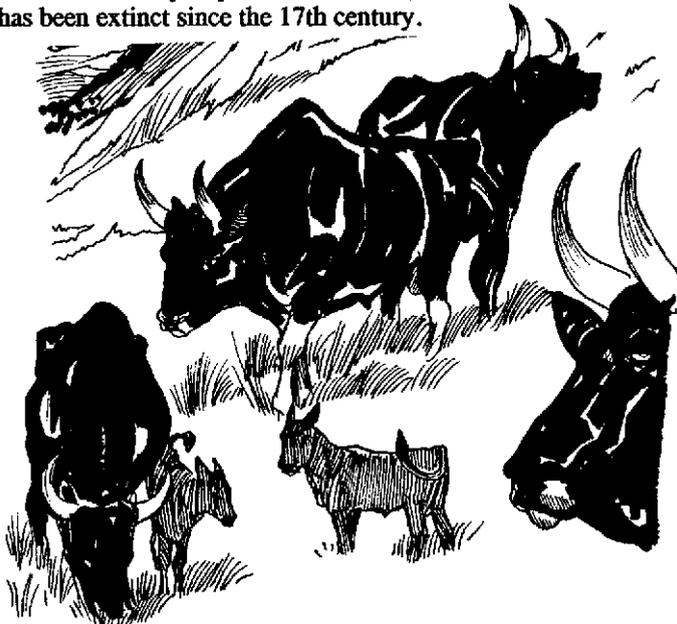
Treat aurochs like any other herd herbivore — they will flee if threatened. Males protect the herd — by charging and trampling. Their horns do 1d+2 impaling damage; their trample does 1d+1 crushing damage.

Bear

Bear, Brown

ST: 15-19	Speed/Dodge: 7/6	Size: 2✝
DX: 13	PD/DR: 1/1	Wt: 200-700 lbs.
IQ: 5	Damage: 1d cr✝	Habitats: F, M, S
HT: 14/16-20	Reach: C	

Bear, Cave

ST: 27-33	Speed/Dodge: 7/6	Size: 3✝
DX: 12	PD/DR: 1/2	Wt: 1,200-1,600 lbs
IQ: 5	Damage: 2d-2 cr✝	Habitats: M, F
HT: 14/24-30	Reach: C,1	

Bears are omnivores which, with the exception of the polar bear, actually eat more plants than animals. They are found the world over. Most bears will get out of your way if they hear you coming, but if surprised can be quite dangerous. Make a reaction roll to determine whether the bear is hungry, aggressive or just gets out of the way. Mother bears are extremely protective of their cubs, reacting at -8.

Bears strike with their claws for crushing damage, or bite for the same amount of cutting damage.

Brown bears are found in the northwestern portion of North America and throughout Europe and Asia. A brown bear walking on all fours is a 2-hex animal. When standing on its rear legs to fight, it occupies only one hex.

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