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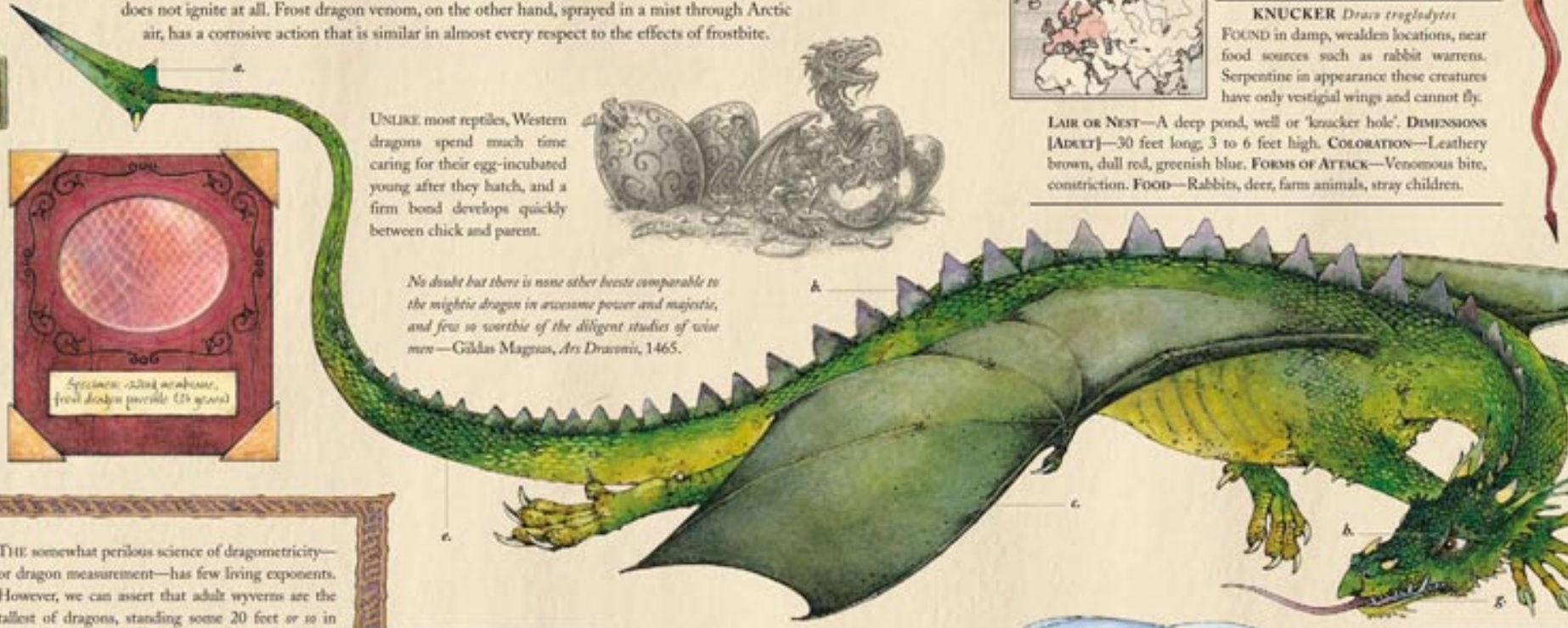
DIFFERENT SPECIES OF DRAGON.
WESTERN DRAGONS.

While it is likely that all of these Western dragon species are closely related, the keen dragonologist will note a number of interesting differences between them. For example, while the rich flame of the European dragon is produced from a combustible venom [see Chapter III], that of the knucker does not ignite at all. Frost dragon venom, on the other hand, sprayed in a mist through Arctic air, has a corrosive action that is similar in almost every respect to the effects of frostbite.



UNLIKE most reptiles, Western dragons spend much time caring for their egg-incubated young after they hatch, and a firm bond develops quickly between chick and parent.

No doubt but there is none other beeste comparable to the mightie dragon in awesome power and majestic, and few so worthie of the diligent studies of wise men—Gildas Magnus, *Ars Draconis*, 1465.

THE somewhat perilous science of dragometricity—or dragon measurement—has few living exponents. However, we can assert that adult wyverns are the tallest of dragons, standing some 20 feet *or so* in height, as may be seen in the following diagram. *a.* Human *b.* Chinese *Lung* *c.* European *d.* Wyvern

EUROPEAN *Draco occidentalis magnus*

KNOWN to most people through their ability to breathe fire and their love of treasure, this species is now confined to a few remote areas. Effective at using language, they shed their skins triennially.

LAIR OR NEST—A mountain or sea cave in a remote area. **DIMENSIONS [ADULT]**—45 feet long; 13 to 17 feet high. **COLORATION**—Red, green, black or occasionally gold. **FORMS OF ATTACK**—Flame, tail, claws, horns. **FOOD**—Cattle, sheep, humans [the latter only if no other food available—due to bitter flavour].

KNUCKER *Draco troglodytes*

FOUND in damp, wealden locations, near food sources such as rabbit warrens. Serpentine in appearance these creatures have only vestigial wings and cannot fly.

LAIR OR NEST—A deep pond, well or 'knucker hole'. **DIMENSIONS [ADULT]**—30 feet long; 3 to 6 feet high. **COLORATION**—Leathery brown, dull red, greenish blue. **FORMS OF ATTACK**—Venomous bite, constriction. **FOOD**—Rabbits, deer, farm animals, stray children.

WHILE some authorities claim the knucker is simply a junior form of the European dragon, this is almost certainly not the case. Indeed, its preference for damp holes and low-lying locations is in contrast to that of its larger cousins who prefer rocky, mountain areas. Also, although knuckers do hoard treasure, they will attack with venom rather than fire.

PROMINENT features of the European dragon:
a. 'arrowhead' tail—hardened for use in fighting
b. thick spines *c.* large bat-like wings
d. clawed talons *e.* scales *f.* horns
g. fanged teeth *h.* eyes—all dragons have a truly phenomenal sense of sight

FROST *Draco occidentalis maritimus*

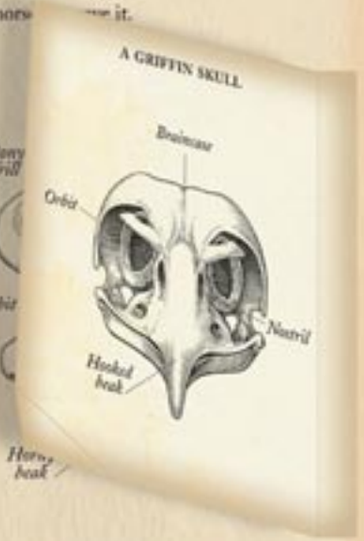
ANNUAL Arctic—Antarctic migrators, frost dragons fly thousands of miles each year to ensure that they spend the greater part of the year in their favoured dark, winter climates hunting for food.

LAIR OR NEST—A sea-facing cave hollowed out from a glacier or iceberg. **DIMENSIONS [ADULT]**—40 feet long; 12 to 15 feet high. **COLORATION**—Pure white, or white tinged with blue or pink. **FORMS OF ATTACK**—Fearsome 'frosty blast', tail, claws, horns. **FOOD**—Giant squid, polar bear, orca, walrus, leopard seal.

CHAPTER IV

BEASTS OF THE AIR

The evolution of winged creatures has always been a mystery. It is conceivable that there was once a horse that could leap a little higher than others thanks to tiny wing-like buds on its back. Over the millennia, it is possible that these buds developed into proper wings. Although hard to imagine, something like this must have happened, as we have the existence of the winged hors[illegible] it.



GRIFFIN *Gryps vulgaris*

ONCE common in much of Asia and Europe, griffins are now confined to the Tian Shan mountain region and have a habit of hoarding gold and precious stones.

LAIR OR NEST—A shallow nest on the open steppe. DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—15 feet long; 8 to 10 feet high. APPEARANCE—Leonine body with aquiline front legs, head, and wings. FORMS OF ATTACK—Talons, beak. FOOD—Any large herbivores, especially wild horses.

Winged horses, if you can locate them, are perfectly content to be ridden and are a much more comfortable option for long flights than a dragon, due to the softness of their coat.

Above, Bellerophon on the winged horse Pegasus, slaying a chimera. Using one fabulous beast to help kill another is hardly conducive to conservation.

WINGED HORSE *Equus volucer*

FOUND among the remoter Greek islands, winged horses, although rare, are a remarkably friendly creatures, once initial contact has been made.

LAIR OR NEST—None, although, unlike the ordinary horse, it has no herding instinct. DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—6 to 9 feet long; 5 to 8 feet high. APPEARANCE—A winged pony with highly developed shoulder muscles. FORMS OF ATTACK—Biting, kicking. FOOD—Grasses.

HIPPOGRIFF *Hippo gryps*

ALTHOUGH it looks like the offspring of a griffin and its chief prey, the horse, the hippogriff is a distinct species. It dwells in forests rather than on open plains.

LAIR OR NEST—A large bower made from branches, twigs, and flowers. DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—6 to 8 feet long; 3 to 5 feet high. APPEARANCE—Like that of a horse with the front parts of an eagle. FORMS OF ATTACK—Claws, hooves, beak. FOOD—Nuts, hay, seeds, oats.

PROMINENT features of the hippogriff:
a. aquiline [eagle-like] head
b. extremely powerful front legs and talons
c. equine rear parts
d. powerful, feathered wings

HIPPOGRIFF
Hippo gryps

Hippogriff chicks can fly before they can walk.

Hippogriffs moult during the summer. It is hard to collect their feathers, which become immediately invisible but still can be spotted, as they leave telltale shadows.

The hippogriff attracts a mate in a similar manner to that of a European dragon, decorating a nest and then putting on a highly elaborate courtship display.

HATCHING HIPPOGRIFFS

Given that the eggs of griffins and hippogriffs are nearly identical, it is wise to have a supply of both oats and horsemeat on hand if you are trying to hatch one. Keep the food out of sight, for if the egg turns out to be a hippogriff it will almost certainly find the sight of the horsemeat distressing.

GRIFFIN MISCHIEF

It is not possible to "tame" any of these creatures, but if you are friendly enough, they may offer you a ride. Beware, however, of the mischievous griffin, which may pretend to be asleep and then, when you are on its back, suddenly fly off and begin a series of unscheduled loop-the-loops.