Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

Drake's Comprehensive Compendium of Dragonology

edited by

Dugald A. Steer

published by

Templar Publishing

All Text is Copyright © of the Author / Illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

EUROPEAN DRAGON *Draco occidentalis magnus*

GENERAL PHYSICAL TRAITS

Having colonised the globe through its ability to fly, the European dragon may now be found in mountainous regions the world over. Most common in Europe [though still rare], it is the dragon species most often featured in folklore and fairy tales.



SIZE
13 to 17 feet high at the shoulder;
45 feet long.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION
Compact, muscular torso with large head; two fully formed, bat-like wings, leathery in texture; four legs, the front being smaller and used for grasping; long, flexible tail ending in arrowhead.

COLOUR
Red, green, black, or occasionally gold; very aged specimens can turn almost pure white. Belly has a smoother, paler appearance than the rest of the body, with less armour than the back and sides.

SCALES & SPINES
Prominent scales on the back, tail, and legs; sharp, thick spines along the length of the backbone; skin is shed triennially and is much sought after due to its fireproof qualities.

HEAD & HORNS
The European dragon has an intelligent demeanour, with piercing eyes that can range in colour from golden yellow to olive green. Variations occur between individuals in size, number, and pattern of head spikes, horns, and frills. Older males often develop prominent nose horns and horned frills around their cheeks. Both males and females display long wattle-like appendages beneath their jowls, though the purpose of these is not yet fully understood [see Mating, page 132]. Chin whiskers are also found in older males. Like most young dragons, European chicks have a small nose horn, which they use to break through the hard shell of the egg. This is shed at around six months.

CALL
Seldom heard but ranges from a low growl to a deafening roar. The creature also utters a high-pitched whistle when displaying affection. Of all dragon species, the European has the most highly developed talent for learning other languages. Most educated specimens can converse fluently in English as well as their own Dragonish, though older individuals will often insist on speaking only Latin—a hindrance to communication in this modern age but the language of choice for any dragon more than four hundred years old.

FOOD
Any large herbivores, including deer, mountain goats, cattle, and sheep; other farm stock if away from human habitation; has also been known to take humans [only if no other food is available, due to their bitter taste].



European Dragon



Profile–Side view



Profile–Top view



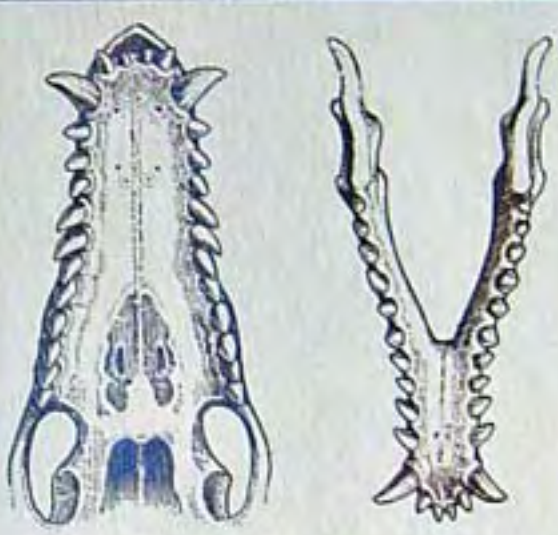
All dragons, with the exception of the bucca, have superb eyesight, thanks to six optic nerves, which enable them to see light in all parts of the spectrum.



Chick

Adolescent male

Fully grown female



In addition to tough molars for grinding bone and sharp canines for tearing flesh, many species of dragons have fangs connected to a reservoir of flammable venom that enable them to breathe fire.



Front

Rear

EUROPEAN DRAGON *Draco occidentalis magnus*

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

HABITAT

Wild, mountainous regions; peat bogs; coniferous forests; remote islands. Specimens may sometimes be seen perched on rocky crags or, in the case of juveniles, in the branches of ancient pine trees. Alpine environments are perfect sites for some European dragons that dwell in caves just above the tree line. Living among mountains, they can hide easily. Specialised climbing equipment is needed in order to even attempt the study of these elusive creatures.

LAIR

A mountain or sea cave, almost always in an area away from human habitation and preferably having a single entrance.

FORMS OF ATTACK

Will attack using flame and claw; also uses arrowhead tail as a weapon. Less frequently, males use horns to toss victims.

GENERAL NOTES

Although many dragons like to hoard, the European is perhaps the most adept at collecting treasure. Any shiny bauble may prove to be of interest, but older dragons are discerning in their choice and will usually pick only items of value: precious metals, especially gold in any form; gemstones; and other man-made items of interest, such as mirrors. Books are also popular among educated specimens.

TUNGUSKA DRAGONS

A subspecies of the common European, the mighty Tunguska, also known as the war dragon, originates from the Siberian wastes of Eastern Europe. Always black in colour, these dragons are no longer found in the wild, having been domesticated by humans and bred over the centuries for use in war. Their brute strength and considerable stamina, coupled with a generally dull-witted sensibility, unfortunately make them ideal for this purpose.

