

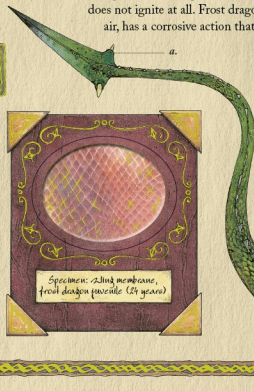
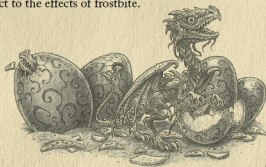


DIFFERENT SPECIES OF DRAGON.  
WESTERN DRAGONS.

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 beast comparable to the mighty dragon in awesome power and majestic, and few so 'worthy of the diligent studies of wise men—Gildas Magnus, Ars Draconis, 1465.*



Specimen: Skin membrane, front dragon forehead (24 years)

EUROPEAN *Draco occidentalis magnus*

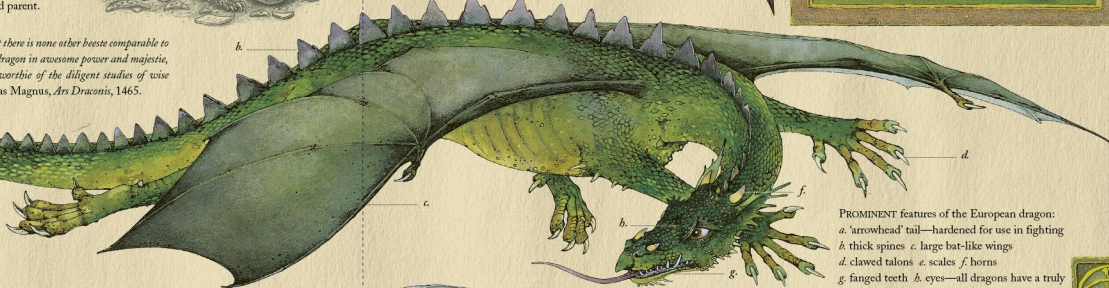
KNOWN to most people through their ability to breathe fire and their love of treasure, this species is now confined to a few remote areas. Effective at using language, they shed their skins triennially.

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, woodland 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.



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 migrants, 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.





DIFFERENT SPECIES OF DRAGON.  
EASTERN DRAGONS.

It is interesting to note that, while legends of Western dragons portray them as vicious, bloodthirsty monsters, Eastern dragons are for the most part seen as benevolent helpers to mankind. The reasons for this most likely stem from the historical interactions that mankind has had with different species of dragon. Clearly some have been better neighbours than others.



Some species of lung lay their eggs in running water.

TIBETAN *Draco montana*

THINNER and redder than its counterpart, the Asian lung, the Tibetan dragon is a lover of high altitudes. Its main prey is the Himalayan yeti, a large mountain ape that has adapted to the cold conditions and rarefied atmosphere found in the higher mountains.

LAIR OR NEST—On the open mountainside in summer, in a shallow den of snow in winter. DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—40 feet long; 10 to 12 feet high. COLORATION—Almost invariably red. FORMS OF ATTACK—Biting, or else constriction. FOOD—Usually the large mountain apes known as yetis, sometimes yaks.

## LINDWORMS.

For years it was thought that the explorer Marco Polo's description of a lindworm was actually a Chinese crocodile. This notion is quite ludicrous, as the beast he described had only two legs and even a child knows a crocodile has four.

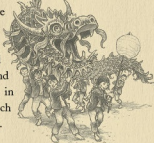
LINDWORM *Draco serpentalis*

FLEET of foot as a wild pony, the lindworm is most often seen at a distance, sometimes in pairs, chasing its prey of wild Bactrian camels on the huge, empty steppes of the Asian interior.

LAIR OR NEST—A shallow scratch or nest in the earth, out of the wind. DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—35 feet long; 8 to 10 feet high. COLORATION—Variable, often green, or sandy yellow. FORMS OF ATTACK—Claws, constriction. FOOD—Bactrian [two-humped] camels. The lindworm sometimes menaces silk caravans by night.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EAST &amp; WEST.

Sadly, in the West, mummers' plays enacting the mutilation and killing of dragons used to be fairly common events at May fairs. In the East, dragons are granted a proper respect. During Chinese festivals they are often honoured with dragon boat races and dragon dances as shown in this scene depicting such a dance in Canton in 1884.



Specimen: Shed skin from Asian lung (250 years)

ASIAN LUNG *Draco orientalis*

LUNG are most often found near the rivers, streams and lakes that hide their underwater lairs. Females carry their eggs with them for safety, using the lairs to store the pearls and opals they hoard away.

The number of toes varies across the various subspecies.

LAIR OR NEST—Usually an underwater cave or grotto.

DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—40 feet long; 12 to 15 feet high.

COLORATION—Blue, black, white, red or yellow.

FORMS OF ATTACK—Horns, teeth & claws used defensively.

FOOD—Mainly fish and birds, particularly roasted swan.



Japanese lung have four toes, Indonesian three.



Chinese or Imperial lung have five toes.



CHINESE LUNG *Draco orientalis magnus*

## PROMINENT features of Chinese lung:

a. long, whiskery feelers b. stag-like horns c. mane d. five toes on each claw e. egg—usually carried in foreclaw f. large scales g. feathery tail

The lithe movement of this species has given rise to the erroneous belief that it too can fly.

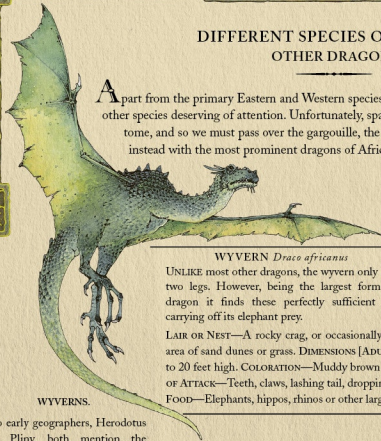
The lung's egg was once thought to be a huge pearl.

LONG associated with all kinds of water, Asian lung were seen as having power over rainfall and storm. It seems likely that the four legendary Chinese 'dragon kings' were highly impressive specimens.



DIFFERENT SPECIES OF DRAGON.  
OTHER DRAGONS.

Apart from the primary Eastern and Western species of dragon, there are a wide variety of other species deserving of attention. Unfortunately, space is limited in such a wide-ranging tome, and so we must pass over the gargouille, the naga and many others, and deal instead with the most prominent dragons of Africa, the Americas and Australia.

WYVERN *Draco africanus*

UNLIKE most other dragons, the wyvern only has two legs. However, being the largest form of dragon it finds these perfectly sufficient for carrying off its elephant prey.

LAIR OR NEST—A rocky crag, or occasionally a circular nest in an area of sand dunes or grass. DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—50 feet long; 18 to 20 feet high. COLORATION—Muddy brown to lime green. FORMS OF ATTACK—Teeth, claws, lashing tail, dropping from great heights.

FOOD—Elephants, hippos, rhinos or other large herbivores.

WYVERNS.

Two early geographers, Herodotus and Pliny, both mention the wyvern's taste for elephants. It is possible that the giant elephant-hunting bird of Arabian legend, the Roc, was an early case of mistaken identity.



PROMINENT features of the amphithere:  
a. hypersensitive eyesight b feathery  
frill around head c legless, serpentine  
body d very large wings e feathery tail

## THE PHOENIX.

The *archaeopteryx* fossils discovered in 1860 and hailed as the 'missing link' between reptiles and birds, helped many people to understand Darwin's *Origin of Species*. In reality these fossils belonged to a primitive form of phoenix, a 'bird' that uses a highly effective fire-bath in order to rid itself of parasites, and in fact the 'missing link' between reptiles and amphitheres. Sadly, phoenixes are so scarce that until recently there was thought to be only one specimen in existence.



A fire-bath improves the phoenix's plumage so much that people thought it 'died' and was 'born again'.

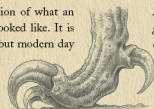


Specimens: a) hind membrane,  
marsupial dragon (to gaze)

The Mexican amphithere almost certainly inspired the warlike Aztecs in their descriptions of their god, Quetzalcoatl.



Amphithere feathers have a sparkling, golden appearance.



Note the tremendous gripping power in the original claw, now lost.

AMPHITHERE *Draco americanus*

In addition to the well-known Mexican feathered amphithere, there is a fiery North American variety that primarily hunts buffalo and has sometimes been mistaken for a gigantic moth.

LAIR OR NEST—Among the reeds on lakesides or off-shore islands. DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—45 feet long; 5 to 10 feet high. COLORATION—Green. FORMS OF ATTACK—Flaming breath, tail lash, constriction. FOOD—all the large indigenous mammals of the Americas, typically llamas in the south and buffaloes in the north.

## MARSUPIAL DRAGONS.

It is interesting to note that marsupial dragons are found not only in Australia but also in the Patagonian region of South America, half a world away. There are a number of other marsupial creatures that have been discovered

here too that exist nowhere else in the world. One might almost speculate that Australia was once attached to South America aeons ago, if the notion were not so preposterous!

As yet, little is known about the vast Australian interior.

MARSUPIAL *Draco marsupialis*

THOUGHT to be extinct, the marsupial dragon is largely confined to the south east of Australia. It breathes blue smoke and often starts bushfires so that it can catch its prey as they are driven before the flames.

LAIR OR NEST—Rocky caves in Blue Mountain eucalypt forests. DIMENSIONS [ADULT]—25 feet long; 15 to 18 feet high. COLORATION—Green or blue-ish. FORMS OF ATTACK—Flaming breath, lashing tail, kicking feet, boxing 'fists'. FOOD—any large marsupials; smaller prey are sought while rearing young.

As powerful hind legs evolved, the wings shrunk.



The marsupial dragon rears one young at a time in a fiery pouch.

Study of the amphithere skeleton reveals vestigial legs.



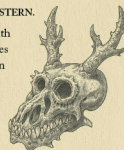
THE NATURAL HISTORY OF DRAGONS.  
DRAGON BIOLOGY & PHYSIOLOGY.

**M**ost species of dragons are reptilian and share many features of this animal type such as egg laying, although they also care for their young. They are unusual in that they are the only creatures who can speak with meaning apart from humans. However, not all dragons have managed this feat, and it seems likely that it is only the older, more experienced dragons who have developed this skill.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EASTERN & WESTERN.

By comparing this Chinese dragon skull with the European dragon skull below, differences in the essential shape of eastern and western species can be seen.

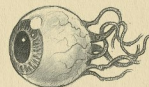
*Dragon bones are not often found because of their very fast rate of decomposition.*



SIGHT.

Dragons have the best sight of any animal and were sometimes slain so their eyes could be used in telescopic lenses. It may be that Galileo used a dragon lens in his very first telescope, before realising that fairly good lenses could be made by grinding glass.

*A dragon can spot a valuable gem from 6000 feet.*



*A dragon's eye has six optic nerves, used to see light in different parts of the spectrum.*

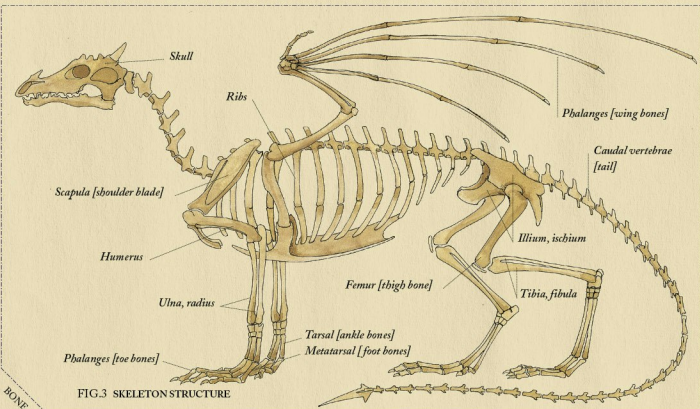
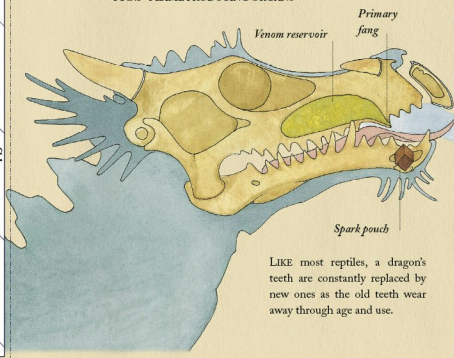


FIG.3 SKELETON STRUCTURE

FIG.5 FLAME PRODUCING ORGANS



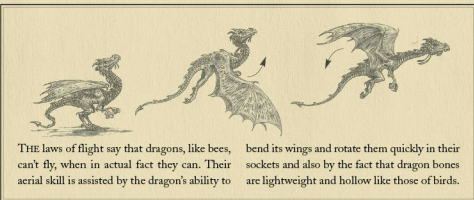
*A dragon's fire can reach a temperature of 1000 degrees!*



FEEDING & DIGESTION.

Digestion is fairly straightforward in dragons. In general, a dragon will eat its prey whole where this is practicable. If not, it may rip it into tasty chunks that are small enough to eat. A dragon feeds once every few weeks. Sometimes when a tough specimen is eaten, or one with a hard, armoured exterior, the dragon will regurgitate its prey at leisure in order to 'shell' it and flame-grill it to a more succulent tenderness.

LIKE most reptiles, a dragon's teeth are constantly replaced by new ones as the old teeth wear away through age and use.



THE laws of flight say that dragons, like bees, can't fly, when in actual fact they can. Their aerial skill is assisted by the dragon's ability to

bend its wings and rotate them quickly in their sockets and also by the fact that dragon bones are lightweight and hollow like those of birds.



WINGS.

In this picture one can see how the surprisingly bat-like wings of the European dragon are affixed to the small 'fingers' that can be used to aid the dragon in climbing sheer cliffs [and by extension, tall buildings].



SCALES.

The hard scales of the dragon are capable of resisting most projectiles, and can be worked into bullet-proof armour using steel rivets.



CLAWS.

Made of keratin, like our own hair and nails, dragons must be careful to avoid breathing fire on their claws or they stink horribly.

