

A RAGING SWAN PRESS COLLECTOR'S EDITION
DARK OAK

AN ADVENTURE FOR 5TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS



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DARK OAK: COLLECTOR'S EDITION

A Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Compatible Adventure for 5th-level characters by Creighton Broadhurst and Steve Hood

Beneath the fetid roots of a noisome swamp linger the pathetic remnants of a once proud and noble tribe. Laid low by a powerful narcotic administered by their ambitious (but wildly paranoid) mistress, the lizardfolk of the Dark Oak are but a shadow of their former greatness. Now, in the fetid caverns below the slumbering body of a diseased treant she plots to bring bloody slaughter to the folk of the nearby villages before her followers forget their proud heritage and sink into a lethargy from which there is no escape.



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ERRATA

We like to think *Dark Oak Collector's Edition* is completely error free, but we are realists. So in that spirit, we shall post errata three months after release on ragingswan.com. We aren't going to be correcting typos and spelling errors, but we will correct any game mechanic or balance issues that come to light.

BONUS MATERIAL

Thank you for purchasing the collector's edition of *Dark Oak Collector's Edition*; we hope you enjoy it and that you check out our other fine print and PDF products.

We at Raging Swan are committed to providing first class web enhancements for our products. Visit ragingswan.com/darkoak to download bonus materials including:

- Tagged and untagged maps of the caverns, local area and the village of Thornhill.
- Compiled stat block listings.
- Player handouts

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FOREWORD

The original version of *Dark Oak* came out in the dim distant recesses of March 2011. Since then, the original version of the adventure has gained some very favourable reviews (four five-star reviews at the time of writing).

My co-schemer on this project, Steve Hood, recently popped over to Raging Swan Press's Global Headquarters with the crazy scheme of doing a collector's print version of the module. Needless to say, it didn't take me long to warm to the idea! You hold the results in your hand and I hope you like it.

As you will no doubt have realised already, *Dark Oak Collector's Edition* is a fusion of two Raging Swan products: *Dark Oak* and *Village Backdrop: Thornhill*. You'll also note this collector's edition is not a straight cut and paste job of the two previous supplements. We've made some tweaks to the adventure background to better align Thornhill with the Dark Oak tribe, added more art and even provided new, never seen before material detailing the surrounding marshland. I've also taken the opportunity to fix some typos that snuck into the original texts as well as expunge a couple of errors in the stat blocks (touch AC 110 – really?)

Hopefully this extended version of the adventure should give you enough material for several gaming sessions; first the PCs visit the dreary village of Thornhill before entering the marshes in search of the Dark Oak tribe and their fell mistress. Additionally, Steve's new area map provides several other adventuring locales in the vicinity the PCs could visit (either intentionally or unintentionally if they get lost!)

In any event, I hope you find *Dark Oak Collector's Edition* useful and your PCs enjoy exploring Thornhill and meeting the Dark Oak tribe. If you've got any comments about the module, I'd love to hear them. You can contact me at creighton@ragingswan.com. Alternatively, I'd be very grateful if you could spare the time to write a review for the module – if you do please let me know so I can go read it!



STAT BLOCKS BY CR

CR		PAGE
1/3	Villager N male human commoner 1	16
1	Gyric Walwin N male half-elf wizard (diviner) 2	15
1/2	Dark Oak Young N young lizardfolk	31
1	Dark Oak Female N female lizardfolk	31
2	Odda Kerrich NE male human half-orc rogue 2/cleric 1	15
2	Dark Oak Veteran Warrior N male lizardfolk warrior 2	26, 30
3	Zissren NG female advanced lizardfolk adept 2	16
3	Shral N advanced crocodile	28
3	Gigantic Dark Oak Warrior N male giant lizardfolk warrior 2	30
4	Dark Oak Champion N male lizardfolk warrior 6	26
5	S'Kar N male advanced lizardfolk warrior 6	32
7	Luhalianna N (CE) treant	24
7	Ssjarlith NE female advanced lizardfolk druid 5	33



READING STAT BLOCKS

Dark Oak Collector's Edition includes all necessary stat blocks; these notes explain how to read them. Unless otherwise noted, all listed scores include all the creature's normal modifiers. Stat blocks appear in four sections: basic, defensive, offensive and supplemental.

BASIC

Name, CR and XP: The monster's name appears first followed by its CR and how many experience points it is worth. If more than one creature is encountered, a bracketed number lists how many appear.

Appearance: The GM can read aloud or paraphrase this section. If a picture depicts the creature, this section may be omitted.

Sex, Race, Class and Level: If the monster has class levels these appear here along with its race and sex. The first noted class is the creature's favoured class.

Alignment and Type: The creature's abbreviated alignment and its type (including applicable subtypes).

Init and Senses: This creature's initiative modifier appears before any special senses (such as scent or darkvision) and the creature's Perception and Sense Motive scores. If the creature has special Perception-based abilities, such as trapfinding or stonecunning, these appear here.

Speed: The creature's modified land speed appears first along with any other relevant speeds (such as climb or fly). If the creature's base land speed is different to its modified speed this is also listed.

ACP and Movement Skills: ACP presents the creature's normal armour check penalty modifier. If the creature's Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, Stealth or Swim modifier differs from the relevant ability modifier minus its armour check penalty, these skills appear here.

DEFENSIVE

AC: The creature's normal, touch and flat-footed AC along with its CMD; additionally this section lists any defensive powers or abilities that affects the creature's AC.

Immune, Resist and Weaknesses: If the creature has immunity, resistance or a vulnerability to an effect or condition it appears here.

Fort, Ref and Will: The creature's saving throw modifiers along with any conditional modifiers and defensive powers (such as evasion) and spell resistance appear here.

HP: The creature's full, normal hit points along with the number

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Special abilities appear in the section to which they are best suited. Thus, offensive abilities appear with a creature's attacks while defensive ones appear with its other defences. Full write-ups of irrelevant powers (such as those that could not affect combat) are omitted. The effects of abilities that factor into a creature's normal attacks or defences have already been included in the relevant calculations.

of hit dice it possesses. A bracketed hit point total indicates that the creature is injured. If the creature has damage reduction or hardness it appears here.

OFFENSIVE

Space, Base Atk and CMB: The creature's space, base attack bonus and CMB.

Melee: This section lists a creature's melee attacks. If the attack has a reach that is not 5 ft. it is listed here. This line also lists any specific feats a creature can use with the attack (for example Power Attack), but the effects of these feats are not included in the attack's statistics. Each attack includes attack bonus and damage information. If the attack has the default critical hit characteristics (20/x2) this information is omitted.

Ranged: This section lists the creature's ranged attacks. It always includes the attack's range. Each attack includes attack bonus and damage information. This line also lists any specific feats a creature can use with the attack (for example Point Blank Shot), but the effects of these feats are not included in the attack's statistics. If the attack has the default critical hit characteristics (20/x2) this information is omitted.

Atk Options: This section lists any abilities or feats that can affect more than one of the creature's attacks, unless it has already been presented with the creature's specific attacks. Subsequent listings describe all but the most basic abilities in depth.

Special Actions: This section lists any useful abilities that a creature could use in battle. Subsequent listings describe all but the most basic abilities in more depth.

Spells and Spell-Like Abilities: The creature's caster level, along with its concentration modifier and domains appears in brackets before the main spell listing. If one or more of the creature's spells require a touch attack, the relevant attack bonus is included. Spells available appear in reverse order from highest to lowest level. Spells denoted ^D are domain spells. If applicable, a spell's DC is also provided.

Combat Gear: This section lists any combat-related equipment the creature possesses.

SUPPLEMENTAL

Abilities and Special Qualities: These sections list the creature's ability scores and any special qualities that do not appear anywhere else in its stat block.

Feats: An alphabetical listing of all the creature's feats.

Skills and Languages: These sections list any skills the creature possesses that have not already appeared in the stat block and all languages spoken or understood. Any language-based special abilities also appear here.

Gear: This section lists any gear not already listed in the creature's stat block. This section hardly ever contains weapons or armour as they usually appear in the relevant sections above.

Spellbook: The contents of the creature's spellbook and its opposition schools.

USING THIS ADVENTURE

The notes below describe how to use *Dark Oak Collector's Edition*.

ANATOMY OF AN ENCOUNTER

Each encounter in this adventure has several distinct parts:

Title: This section includes the encounter's number, title, EL and total XP value. The second paragraph provides an at-a-glance overview of the encounter.

Initial Set-Up and Read Aloud: The next few paragraphs provide basic information about the encounter and a read aloud section describing what the PCs most likely see (dependant on PCs' actions, the GM may have to modify this text).

Players' Handouts: Many of the encounters in this adventure have an attendant Players' Handout. The encounter text notes when this should be displayed to the players.

Tactics: Details of how the encountered creatures work together to defeat the PCs.

Area Features: This section describes any noteworthy features in the area. Details of items found in the area (but not those carried by the PCs' opponents) appear here.

Stat Blocks: The encounter includes full stat blocks for all creatures present.

Treasure: This section presents information on any noteworthy items carried by the creatures present in the encounter (as well as detailing the various checks the PCs can make to identify the items).

Scaling the Encounter: This section provides brief details of how to increase or decrease the encounter's EL by 1.

Sidebars: Occasionally, encounters include sidebars. Such inclusions could detail relevant (but little-used rules) like fighting in water or provide tips for running the encounter.

READING TRAP BLOCKS

These notes explain how to use the various traps appearing in the adventure. The following sections make up a trap block:

BASIC

Name, CR and XP: The trap's name, followed by its CR and XP value appear first.

Read Aloud: Text to read when the trap activates.

DETECT, DISARM, BYPASS

Search: The required DC to discover the trap.

Type: The trap's type.

Disarm: The Disable Device check required to disarm the trap. This section also

includes how long it takes to make the check and the DC for accidentally activating the trap.

Bypass: If there is a special way to bypass the trap, it is noted here.

ATTACK

Trigger: How and when the trap activates.

Reset: How long it takes for the trap to reset.

Effect: The effect of the trap. If the trap has multiple effects, they are presented separately for clarity.

IDENTIFYING TREASURE

During the course of their adventure, the PCs will find treasure that they'll want to identify. Use the notes below to facilitate their efforts.

IDENTIFYING MAGICAL TREASURE

Magic items can be identified in a variety of ways:

Identify a magic item: When the PCs find a magic item it is presented in the following format: *boots of speed* (moderate [DC 18 Knowledge {arcana} transmutation], DC 25 Spellcraft identifies). The first part of the item's listing indicates the strength and type of magic emanating from the item and the Knowledge (arcana) check made in conjunction with *detect magic* needed to identify the magic type; the second part notes the DC required to identify the magic item using *detect magic* and Spellcraft Using *detect magic* and Spellcraft to identify a magic item takes three rounds. A character can attempt to identify a magic item once per day. A PC failing to identify a magic item still determines the strength of the item's aura.

Appraising an Item: A DC 25 Appraise check made on a common item (a ring, piece of jewellery etc.) determines its value and whether it is magical or not (but does not identify the item's magical properties.) This check takes one round. Subsequent checks reveal the same result.

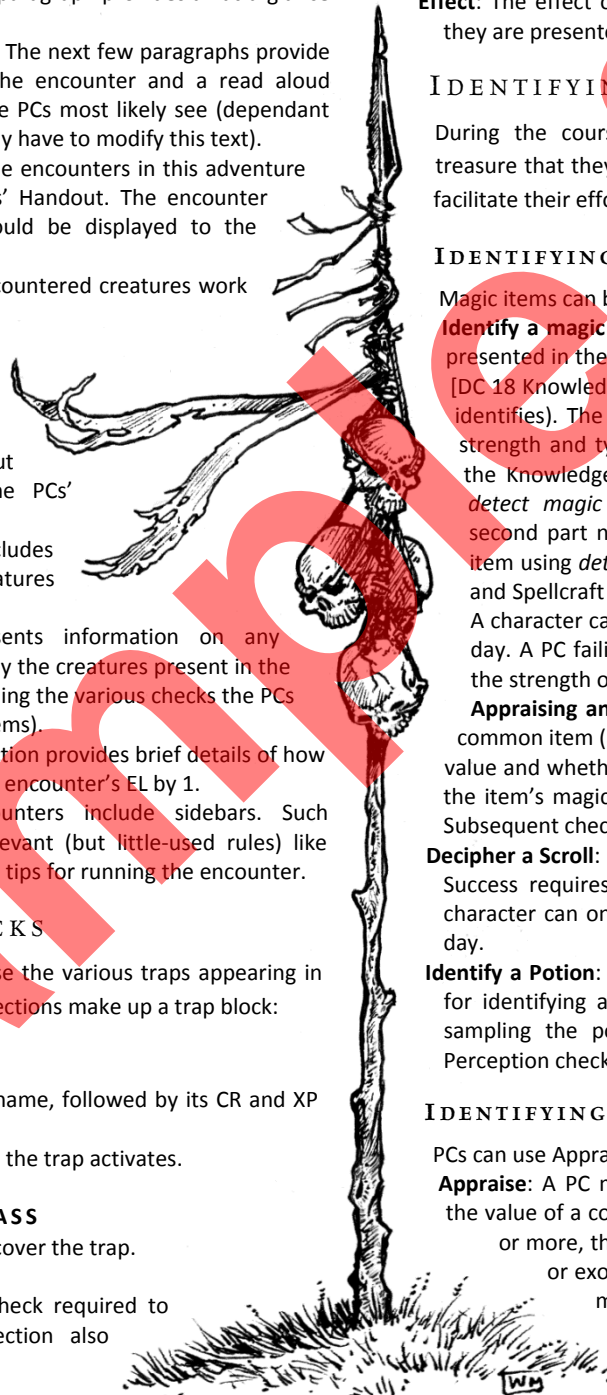
Decipher a Scroll: It takes three rounds to decipher each spell. Success requires a DC 20 + spell level Spellcraft check. A character can only attempt to decipher each spell once per day.

Identify a Potion: Potions can be identified using the method for identifying any normal magic item. Alternatively, a PC sampling the potion and making a DC 15 + spell level Perception check identifies the potion.

IDENTIFYING MUNDANE TREASURE

PCs can use Appraise to identify mundane treasures:

Appraise: A PC making a DC 20 Appraise check determines the value of a common item. If the PC fails the check by five or more, the price is wildly inaccurate. Particularly rare or exotic items require an Appraise check of 25 or more. It takes one standard action to appraise an item.



ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Several years ago, the lizardfolk druid Ssjarlith rose to power among the ranks of her kin dwelling in the Redfern Swamp. The progeny of a small band of dangerously inbred lizardfolk dwelling in the deepest, most remote part of the mire, she explored the marshes discovering parts unknown even to her brethren. Within her breast grew a love of the natural beauty of the marshes, and a fierce desire to both protect it from the humans she saw encroaching upon it and to control its folk.

Cursed with boundless ambition and an unhealthy fascination with the swamp vipers of her dismal home, Ssjarlith gathered a small group of fanatical followers, not by promising conquest and glory but with whispers foretelling the lizardfolk's doom and destruction if the humans of the surrounding lands continued their expansion into the marsh.

Ssjarlith is anything but stupid, however, and realised that to move openly against the humans would be to invite disaster. Thus, she cast about for tools to achieve her ends. Eventually, she discovered Luhalianna, an old and slightly confused treant, dwelling on one of the few dry islands in the swamp. Luhalianna was mourning the loss of his mate at the hands of human loggers and was not himself in the best of health. Ssjarlith befriended the heartbroken treant gaining his trust before infecting him with bark blight (a rare form of mould that drove him partially mad [page 36]).

When Luhalianna's fall into evil was complete, Ssjarlith unleashed her powerful servant onto the surrounding human settlements. The destruction of several isolated farmsteads, groups of loggers and charcoal makers emboldened him to attack a small village. A band of adventurers resting there

overnight, however, offered stern resistance. Driving him off with blade and flame, they chased the treant into the marsh eventually catching him as he crossed the river to reach Ssjarlith's lair. The ensuing battle changed the very shape of the land, but eventually Luhalianna fell, blocking the entrance to the lizardfolk's lair. Satisfied they had defeated the treant menace the adventurers returned to civilisation to much acclaim. Luhalianna had not been slain, however, and by collapsing the entrance to Ssjarlith's lair, he unwittingly obscured her role in the attacks.

Once the lizardfolk dug their way out, and guessing how close to disaster Ssjarlith had brought them, most fled. Realising her plan had failed, Ssjarlith retreated into her lair with a small band of loyal followers to search for some way of ensuring her remaining servants' loyalty. Now years later, and as paranoid as she is evil, the egotistical druid sees plots where there are none and has taken to forcing her folk to consume a herbal drug that makes them both more pliable to her suggestions and dependent upon future doses. Unfortunately, the drug also creates a susceptibility to disease and a certain lethargy that makes day-to-day life difficult. Thus, while the drug ensures her follower's loyalty it has also wrought their doom as few have the energy to gather food or to strike at the hated humans.

Realising her time in the Caverns of the Dark Oak is ending, and fearing her hold over her remaining followers may eventually fail, Ssjarlith has decided to unleash her minions into a final orgy of destruction before seeking out new followers. *Dark Oak* begins a few weeks after the lizardfolk have begun half-hearted attacking nearby settlements.

SYNOPSIS

The PCs learn of the depredations of the Dark Oak tribe of lizardfolk (see "Hooks," page 10) and decide to investigate. They either learn of the lizardfolks' sudden turn to violence while at the dismal swamp village of Thornhill or travel there in response to rumours of trouble in the marsh.

Thornhill is a miserable place, with few attractions for adventurers, and so they likely strike off into the surrounding Redfern Swamp quite quickly.

Travelling through the swamp, and likely following the course of an ancient causeway, they eventually discover the Dark Oak's sunken lair and encounter the corrupted treant, Luhalianna, who can be defeated either with sword and spell or honeyed words.

Gaining access to the tribe's lair, they discover a river inundates much of the caves. Battling lizardfolk warriors and their ferocious crocodile pet, the PCs discover more waterlogged

passages and the crocodile's lair. Beyond, they finally reach the tribe's main nesting chamber. The lizardfolk within are not as fanatical in their devotion to Ssjarlith as those encountered earlier; quick thinking and persuasive arguments can resolve the situation without recourse to violence.

With the bulk of the tribe defeated, the PCs finally uncover Ssjarlith's personal lair and battle the druid and her mate (the fearsome warrior, S'Kar). With their deaths, the PCs can return to civilisation in triumph – the threat from this renegade band of lizardfolk forever eradicated.

If, however, either Ssjarlith or S'Kar survives, the PCs gain an implacable enemy – and one that makes it their business to hunt down the PCs and exact his or her revenge.



JAE YOUNG

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

Dark Oak's design enables a GM to insert it into a home campaign with a minimum amount of work. Thus, while the adventure locale, the village of Thornhill and the immediate environs of the Redfern Swamp are richly detailed, the wider area is only vaguely defined. Similarly, *Dark Oak's* plot does not rely on world-shattering events, famous personages or a particular kingdom or group – such components often make it hard for a GM to insert an adventure into a home campaign.

The main part of the adventure (the Dark Oak's lair) is designed to be played in about a four – six hour session making it a perfect pickup game if a GM needs a module at short notice. However, in this version of the module additional information about the village of Thornhill and the surrounding marshland have been provided enabling a GM to expand *Dark Oak* into a multi-session adventure.

FORESHADOWING

To foreshadow the events of *Dark Oak*, it is a good idea to seed some of these rumours into the campaign prior to running the adventure.

The PCs can learn one or more of the following rumours. A PC making a DC 15 Diplomacy check learns one rumour and one additional rumour for each 5 by which his check exceeds 15. Determine randomly which rumours the PCs hear.

- A decade ago, a treant went berserk and attacked several outlying farms. Adventurers slew the creature and since their foray, calm has reigned over the marsh.
- The Redfern Swamp is a noisome, disease-riddled place. Those exploring its depths often return with a number of unpleasant ailments.
- In the main, the lizardfolk of the Redfern Swamp keep themselves to themselves. The last few weeks, however, have seen a sudden rise in lizardfolk attacks. The attacks have been uncoordinated and largely unsuccessful. Although a few folk have been slain – mainly lone woodsmen and others living on society's periphery – survivors of attacks note that the lizardfolk seem weakened by disease.

HOOKS

Use one or more of the hooks below (or design your own) to explain why the PCs become interested in the Dark Oak tribe.

- Lord Batull, a bearded and morose individual, or some other official summons the PCs to investigate a mystery. A few days ago, the body of a lizardfolk floated down river. The body was emaciated and diseased (and has since been burned as a precaution to stop the spread of disease). Batull is concerned a

sickness might pollute the river – with devastating consequences for the local villages (and his tax revenues) – and so asks the PCs to investigate.

- A local fisherman complains the Fenwater is polluted and that the once bountiful supply of fish is dying off. He begs the PCs to investigate for without the fish, the local economy will collapse and many will starve.
- The PCs encounter Jeron Uren, a half-starved human child, who recently escaped from a lacklustre attack by Dark Oak warriors. Alone, starving and frightened he approaches the PCs' campfire late at night and begs for aid. He is trying to return to his family (who live in Thornhill) and in return for food, shelter and protection tells the PCs his tale.

THORNHILL

The adventure starts when the PCs reach the marsh village of Thornhill (pages 11-16). The PCs may have come to the village specifically to deal with the resurgent lizardfolk menace represented by Ssjarlith and her minions or can be in the village for an unrelated purpose. (The GM should use one or more of the below hooks to draw the PCs into the adventure).

Many of Thornhill's populace are insular, sullen folk. However, a few worry about the sudden resurgence of lizardfolk attacks and try to convince the party to investigate:

- **Aelfgar Wymer** (pages 12 and 14) the prideful, arrogant village reeve. He is desperate for someone else to sort this problem out and (initially) demands the PCs investigate. If they refuse, he quickly resorts to begging and promises his liege (Lord Batull) will reward them richly. Sadly, this is a lie and when the PCs return Aelfgar directs them to Batull's castle which lies a week's ride to the south. Batull, of course, has no idea what they are on about when they arrive to claim their reward.
- **Gyric Walwin** (pages 12 and 15) welcomes the chance to speak with interesting folk (particularly other wizards and scholarly folk) and can relate the general history of the Redfern Swamp.
- **Zissren** (pages 12 and 16) worries that these recent attacks could be the prelude to a general attack by the Red Jaw and Jagged Claw tribes. She knows of the Dark Oak tribe and their fell mistress and happily explains a little of Ssjarlith's descent into evil (and suspects the druid's complicity in the treant Luhalianna's rampage several years ago). While she assumes the Dark Oak tribe is now extinct she suggests exploring their lair may be a good place to start. If the PCs suggest attacking the Red Jaw or Jagged Claw tribes she counsels against such action as the tribes' lairs are hidden deep in the swamp, both have many warriors and such an action could start a war.