

WILDERNESS SURVIVAL GUIDE

by Kim Mohan



The sourcebook for AD&D® game adventures in the great outdoors!

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Special Appreciation to . . .

The three words beneath the title on the cover of this book don't tell the whole story. It would have been impossible for this book to be completed without the help, on both a professional

and personal level, of several other people. For reasons that are widely varied but all vitally important to the author, special thanks are due to . . .

Gary Gygax, who planted and nurtured the tree from which this branch has grown.

Harold Johnson, who did his reviews on time even though the manuscript was late.

Frank Mentzer, whose few words of encouragement were worth more than he knows.

Doug Niles, who wrote a book that was a very tough act to follow.

And my dear Pamela, whose faith in me is exceeded only by my faith in her.

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Preface

Writing the *Wilderness Survival Guide* has been a long and exhausting journey, with more than a few obstacles and pitfalls along the way — not at all unlike a trek through uncharted terrain.

First I had to get my bearings. Where was I, and where did I want to end up? To answer those questions, I prepared an outline. Later on, when I felt myself straying from the path, I would haul out the outline — my compass — and re-orient myself.

Then I had to lay in some provisions for the trip. I scrounged some research material from Frank Mentzer's shelves, sent away for a couple of books from a catalog that Zeb Cook thought would be helpful, and made a lot of trips to public libraries. I went from a person who never seems to find time for reading to one who didn't do anything *but* read. And when I was well stocked with facts and figures, I strapped on my mental backpack and started writing — the real treacherous part of the journey.

Step by step, word by word, I used up my provisions. I was glad to see the thoughts in my head turn into thoughts on paper, because that meant I was making progress. I had no way of knowing whether my supplies would carry me through the trip, but there was no turning back.

Eventually, I reached the point in the journey where I *knew* I was going to reach my destination — a feeling very similar to seeing palm trees on the horizon after plodding across a desert. My load lightened, my pace quickened (approaching deadline may have had something to do with that), and the oasis got visibly closer with every paragraph I completed.

When I got where I was going, I looked back at the path I had taken. Pretty straight, I said to myself; not too much backtracking or meandering. And I was pretty proud of the journal I had kept along the way — the journal you are now holding. The next time your AD&D game characters leave the safety of the city or the seclusion of the dungeon, they will fully realize the threats and the thrills that come from wilderness adventuring. I hope all of your journeys are as successful and as satisfying as mine was.



Kim Mohan
Sept. 5, 1986

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WILDERNESS SURVIVAL GUIDE: WHAT IS IT?

From its inception, the AD&D® game has provided rules for both underground and aboveground adventuring. The *Monster Manual*, which was released in late 1977 as the first of the hardbound AD&D rule books, includes descriptions of creatures that inhabit the wilderness in addition to creatures that are normally found only in the darkest recesses of subterranean caverns. One only needs to read as far as the listing for the anhkheg (“usually found in forests and choice agricultural land”) to realize that, despite its name, the scope of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game is much larger than the most expansive dungeon.

The *Players Handbook* appeared several months later. Here we were introduced to the druid and the ranger, two character types that do their best work in the great outdoors. We were shown a vast repertoire of magic spells, many of which were obviously designed for use outside the dungeon. In various places throughout the book, we were given rules and guidelines for how to handle adventuring in the wilderness.

And then came the *Dungeon Masters Guide* a year later. Entire sections of this massive work were given over to describing and defining facts and concepts that are integral parts of an aboveground adventure. By putting all these pieces of information together along with details from the earlier books and stirring in a liberal amount of deduction and independent design, the Dungeon Master could reasonably and realistically deal with action and adventure in a wilderness setting.

But despite all that has been said or implied in the original rule books (and in the books that have come out since, such as *Journey to the Inner Planes*), a veritable mountain of information about the wilderness remained to be “discovered” and set down in game terms. This book is an attempt to add structure and detail to that part of the AD&D game rules concerned with the proper administration of outdoor wilderness adventures in the campaign.

Many of the new rules and systems presented here are not exclusively limited to use in the wilderness; for instance, guidelines on how long a character can survive without food or water are just as relevant in the dungeon as they are in the outdoors. For this reason, the book will be of some use even to Dungeon Masters and players whose game-playing activity is restricted solely to dungeon delving.

Other parts of the book can only be used during adventures in an outdoor setting; perhaps the most notable example is the system for weather determination given in the appendix at the end of this work. Even if the action in your campaign consists of a succession of dungeon expeditions, player characters will have to spend at least some time on the surface as they travel from one dungeon entrance to the next. And as long as they have to make the trip, why not make it interesting for them?

Defining the Outdoor Environment

The greater part of this book is devoted to presenting rules and guidelines that translate the effects of a natural, outdoor environment into game terms: How much damage does a character suffer from prolonged exposure to extremely hot or extremely cold temperatures? How do the terrain, climate, and weather conditions affect a character’s ability to move and attack? What pre-

cautions must characters take to keep their mounts and pack animals — and themselves, for that matter — in good physical condition? What happens to someone standing nearby when a volcano erupts? How far can a character see on a clear day? (No, the answer is not “forever.”)

The general intent of the *Wilderness Survival Guide* is to be faithful to the literal interpretation of the title. The natural physical environment is described in a fair amount of detail, along with rules for how characters and creatures are affected by that environment — in effect considering the wilderness as a “monster” that must be “defeated” if player characters are to succeed in achieving the goal of their mission. If the Dungeon Master chooses to incorporate these rules into his campaign, player characters will no longer be able to sally forth on a trek across the countryside without considering such fundamental questions as where their next meal is coming from, whether they can protect themselves from the elements, and how they expect to get across the mountain range that lies in their path.

Using these rules will require both the Dungeon Master and the players in a campaign to pay much more attention to details that before they might have disregarded or passed over lightly. Players will have to be much more explicit about exactly what equipment their characters are packing, and may have to include things in their gear that were never considered important before. (A tent doesn’t just appear out of thin air when it’s time to set up camp.) Everyone involved in the game will have to keep close track of time; no longer can a one-day journey be summed up by simply saying, “A day has passed, and you are now here.” When a party stops for the night, it’s no longer sufficient for the Dungeon Master to announce “Here comes the sun again; let’s get going.” Even if outdoor travel is only used as a means of getting from one Significant Place to the next, a trek through the wilderness is an adventure in itself. With proper attention to detail, getting there is half the fun — perhaps even more than half.

For the DM’s Eyes Only

Most of the information in the *Wilderness Survival Guide* is presented for the use of both the Dungeon Master and his players. However, this doesn’t mean that players will almost always know ahead of time what is going to happen to their characters and what they can do about it. The rules and systems in the first part of the book contain enough variables (die rolls) and unknown quantities (Ability Checks and Proficiency Checks) to keep players guessing. Even though a player (and, by definition, his character) may know in general terms what will happen if he pushes his horse too hard, only the Dungeon Master knows *exactly* what will happen in any certain situation and *exactly* when that event will take place. In practical terms, a player can memorize every word of the first part of this book and still have no assurance that his character will be able to deal automatically with every obstacle and opportunity that the wilderness presents.

The second (and much smaller) part of this book contains information especially intended for the Dungeon Master, most of it expressed in the form of suggestions intended to help him flesh out some of the details of what his campaign world looks like and how

DEFINITION OF TERMS

it works. The weather-determination system does get down to specifics instead of dealing entirely in suggestions and generalities, but of course it need not be followed to the letter if the Dungeon Master wants to inject some personal flair into the natural environment of his world. Players are strongly encouraged not to examine the second part of the book, but even if they do they won't learn enough to give their characters an advantage during play. As has been said many times and in many different ways throughout all the AD&D® game rule books, the Dungeon Master is the ultimate authority in his campaign. He is not only entitled, but encouraged, to modify and expand upon the material in this book to suit his preferences and the particular makeup of his campaign. This individualization serves two worthy purposes: It makes every campaign (and every adventure within the context of that campaign) a one-of-a-kind experience, and it keeps the game exciting and challenging even for players who think they know all the rules. The only one who knows *all* the rules is the person behind the big screen at the head of the table. Neither the Dungeon Master nor his players should ever lose sight of that fact.

Definition of Terms

Certain procedures and conventions are used throughout this book. Although some of them may be directly or indirectly defined in other places as well, all of them are listed here for easy reference.

Ability Checks

This procedure, introduced to the AD&D game system in the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, enables the Dungeon Master to determine a player character's success or failure in an attempt to perform some function related to one of the character's ability scores. An Ability Check will always be referred to by the specific ability in question (Strength Check, Dexterity Check, etc.). To conduct the check, the Dungeon Master or the player rolls 1d20 and compares the result to the character's ability score. If the die result is equal to or less than the ability score, the check is successful and the character is able to do what he tried to do. If the die result is greater than the ability score, the check has failed; the character is unable to do what he tried to do, and may suffer adverse effects because of his failure.

In some cases, an Ability Check may be made with a modifier to the die roll that increases or decreases the chance of success. A positive modifier increases the die result and thus decreases the chance of success; a negative modifier works the other way. An ability score greater than 18 is equivalent to 18 for purposes of an Ability Check; thus, there is always at least a 10% chance that an Ability Check will fail (on a roll of 19 or 20). An unmodified die roll of 19 or 20 means automatic failure, even if a negative die roll modifier would bring the result down into the range needed for success.

Proficiency Checks

Following in the footsteps of the *Oriental Adventures* book and the *Dungeoneer's Survival Guide*, this book describes special skills, or proficiencies, not related to weapon use that a player character can acquire to give himself (and perhaps his comrades) a better chance of success when performing a certain task

or attempting to cope with a hazard or a threat.

Sometimes a player character with proficiency can automatically perform some task or function that is impossible for a non-proficient character; at other times, he may be required to make a Proficiency Check to determine his success or failure. The procedure is essentially the same as for an Ability Check, since each proficiency is directly related to a certain ability score. For more details about Proficiency Checks, see the section on Wilderness Proficiencies.

Three Kinds of Temperature

Temperature is the one factor in an outdoor environment that must constantly be taken into consideration: It may or may not be raining, the wind may be calm or ferocious, but the air around characters is *always* of a certain temperature — and if the temperature is very hot or very cold, the atmosphere itself may prove to be a greater hazard to adventurers than any monsters they might encounter.

Actual temperature is equivalent to what the Dungeon Master would read on a thermometer (if such a device existed). It is, simply, the temperature of the air itself.

Effective temperature is the actual temperature modified by conditions that raise or lower the temperature in terms of how it affects characters exposed to it. If the air has an actual temperature of 20 degrees but a stiff wind is blowing, then the effective temperature is considerably lower than 20 degrees, and characters and creatures exposed to the wind are affected accordingly.

Personal temperature is the effective temperature further modified by conditions peculiar to a certain character. Someone who is dressed in heavy clothing at a low effective temperature has a higher personal temperature than someone who is lightly clad.

Each of these terms is used in various places throughout the book, and the distinction is usually quite important.

Other Terminology

"Attack rolls" refers to both the "to hit" die roll and the damage roll, so that a character who suffers a "-2 penalty on attack rolls" must deduct 2 from his "to hit" roll and then (if the attack succeeds) also deduct 2 from his damage roll. A damage roll can never be reduced below 1 point by any penalty or group of penalties.

"Character" refers to "player character" in all cases, and should also be read as "character or creature" unless the context indicates that the usage pertains to player characters only. In general, creatures (non-player characters, monsters, etc.) are capable of performing any feat that a player character can perform, and are subject to the same restrictions, bonuses, and penalties.

"He," "him," and other masculine pronouns are used in the interest of brevity and simplicity instead of usages such as "he or she" and "him or her." This convention is not intended to offend or exclude female characters, players, or Dungeon Masters, and we sincerely hope it does not carry a negative connotation for anyone who reads this book or plays the AD&D game.