



WAY OF THE OWLBEAR



A Monastic Tradition
JEFF C. STEVENS

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WAY OF THE OWLBEAR

Monks of the Way of Owlbear revere the mighty beast, practicing ancient traditions which slowly transform them, giving them physical aspects of the owlbear. The traditions are passed from generation to generation, as the bonds of family are strong with owlbears.

While many practitioners of this tradition study it in their natural racial form, some choose to follow the teachings to its end, permanently transforming into an owlbear.

COMING OF THE OWLBEAR

When you choose this tradition at 3rd level, you gain darkvision to 60 ft. If you already have darkvision, your range increases by 30 ft.

In addition, you can use your ki to gain the senses of the owlbear. As a bonus action, you can spend 1 ki point to gain Advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made until the end of your next turn.

Lastly, you gain a Hoot & Growl ability.

Hoot & Growl: Once per short rest, you may target a creature within 30 ft of you, hooting and growling at it. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of you for 1 minute, as per the *fear* spell. The Save DC for this ability is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier.

FURY OF FUR & FEATHERS

At 6th level, you gain the ability to channel the owlbear's ferocity, using it in conjunction with your other monk abilities and attacks.

As a bonus action, you can spend 2 ki points to enter a battle fury until the end of your next turn.

While in this fury, you lose your 7th level Evasion feature, and you gain the following benefits if you aren't wearing armor.

- Your body doubles in all dimensions, and its weight is multiplied by eight. This growth increases your size by one category-- from Medium to Large, for example. If there isn't enough room for you to double in size, you

attain the maximum possible size in the space available.

- Until the fury ends, you also have advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws.
- Your unarmed strikes become more lethal, dealing 2 extra damage.
- You have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

ASPECT OF THE OWLBEAR

By 11th level, your studies and meditations have transformed your body, giving you a permanent characteristic of the owlbear. Choose one of the following:

Body: A fine, yet tough layer of small feathers and fur covers your entire body. Regardless of the armor you wear, you gain +1 to AC and you have resistance to cold damage.

Claws: Thick, sharp 1-inch claws protrude from your fingers and toes. Your unarmed strike melee attacks deal an additional 2 points of slashing damage. In addition, you gain a climbing speed equal to your base movement rate plus your monk enhancements.

Bite: Your mouth transforms into a sharp beak. You gain a beak attack, an extra attack which you use when you take the attack action. Your new beak attack deals 1d10 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier piercing damage.

FINAL FORM

At 17th level, choose one of the following:

Savage Protector. You protect your companions with the rage of an adult owlbear protecting its family. Whenever a creature within 5 feet of you is hit by a melee attack made by a creature other than you, you can use your reaction to make a melee attack against that creature.

Ascension to the Owlbear. Your quest for personal perfection through training and meditation have made you one with this fantastic monstrosity, permanently transforming you into an owlbear. Your body transforms into an owlbear (see Owlbear Traits).

CHARACTER DEATH

Followers of the Way of the Owlbear do not believe in resurrection. If you are resurrected, your body reverts to the form it was prior to when you transformed into an owlbear.

If you have attained 17th level or higher, and regardless of your decision at 17th level, if you accept death and are not resurrected, you are given an owlbear death ceremony. 1d4 days after your death, 2d10 owlbears find your remains and spend 1d4 + 1 days howling and hooting as they circle your body. If they are unable to reach your body, they perform this ceremony in a place near your remains.

OWLBEAR TRAITS

Monks of the Way of the Owlbear who transform into an owlbear retain all base monk features but lose all other features of the Way of the Owlbear.

Your owlbear character has the following racial traits.

ABILITY SCORE INCREASE: Monks transformed into owlbears may retain their original ability scores. However, you may decide to accept the full transformation, removing your original racial modifiers and replacing them with those below.

Your Strength score increases by 1, and your Wisdom score increases by 2.

ALIGNMENT: Monks transformed into owlbears retain their original alignment.

SIZE: Though natural-born owlbears are large creatures, your original size is maintained.

SPEED: Your base walking speed remains the same and is enhanced by your monk abilities.

BATTLE FRENZY: Your ferocious instincts manifest, giving you enhanced combat abilities. On your turn, you can enter into a frenzied attack as a bonus action.

While frenzied, you gain the following benefits if you aren't wearing armor.

- When you make an unarmed attack, you gain a +2 bonus to the damage roll.
- You have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Your frenzy lasts for 1 minute. It ends early if you are knocked unconscious or if your turn ends and you haven't attacked a hostile creature since your last turn or taken damage since then.

You can also end your frenzy on your turn as a bonus action.

You may enter a battle frenzy twice per day, after which you must finish a long rest before you can battle frenzy again.

HOOT & GROWL: Once per short rest, you may target a creature within 30 ft of you. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of you for 1 minute, as per the *fear* spell. The Save DC for this ability is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier.

IMPOSING PRESENCE: You have proficiency in the Intimidation and Persuasion skills. If you already have proficiency in these skills, you now have expertise.

KEEN SIGHT AND SMELL: You have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

NATURAL ARMOR: Though your body shape and paws hinder you from wearing humanoid armor or wielding shields, your thick fur and fine feathers provide you with a base AC of 13 + your Dexterity modifier. A monk transformed into an owlbear retains their Unarmored Defense, giving you an AC of 13 + your Dexterity modifier + your Wisdom modifier.

In addition, you gain resistance to cold damage.

Owlbears may be fitted with barding.

NATURAL WEAPONS: Your new body allows you to attack with your claws and beak. You choose which

natural weapon you use when you take the attack action.

Claws: 2d8 + Dexterity or Strength modifier, plus additional magical modifiers, as slashing damage.

Beak: 1d10 + Dexterity or Strength modifier, plus additional magical modifiers, as piercing damage.

UNWAVERING COURAGE: You are immune to being frightened.

LANGUAGES: You can speak and read all languages you knew before your transformation. In addition, you know the Owlbear language, which consists of hoots, screeches, growls, purrs, and roars. Your paws prevent you from utilizing writing implements.

DESIGNER NOTES

WHY I DID WHAT I DID

This monastic tradition could have easily been written as a Barbarian Totem or Druid Circle. I chose to write it as a monastic tradition based on the fact that many martial arts styles are influenced by animals.

COMING OF THE OWLBEAR

This section gives the character a few of the basic owlbear traits.

The darkvision and darkvision enhancement seemed a good addition to a novice of this tradition.

Rather than giving the character advantage to Wisdom (Perception) checks, since they are a novice in this tradition, I decided to have them use a ki point to channel this aspect of the owlbear.

Hoot & Growl. I had originally given the monk the thaumaturgy cantrip. Andrew Bishkinsky convinced me to make this a new feature.

FURY OF FUR & FEATHERS

Owlbears are known to be ferocious creatures. I wanted to show this in the tradition. I chose to use a modified version of the enlarge spell.

I chose to make this feature cost 2 ki points to limit its usage at lower levels. Doing so allows the Barbarian to shine while raging and causes monks to use their ki points wisely.

ASPECT OF THE OWLBEAR

I felt the teaching, practices, and meditations of the tradition would channel the owlbear into the monk. What better way to represent this channeling than by giving the monk a choice of how their body transforms.

I allowed for three choices, which I thought were the most obvious representations of the owlbear.

FINAL FORM

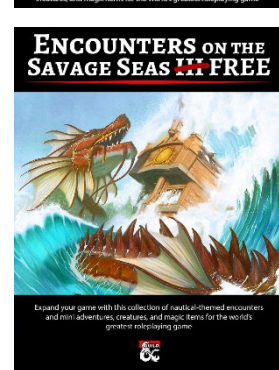
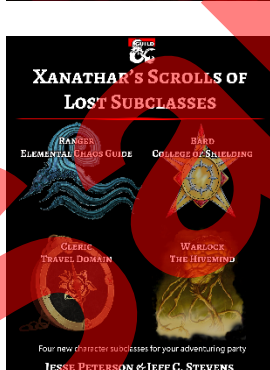
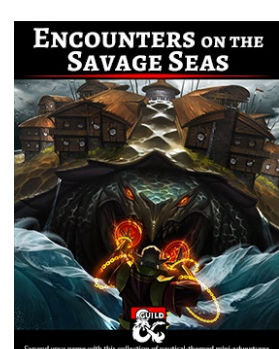
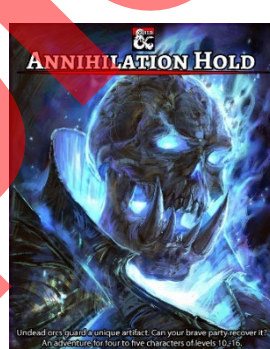
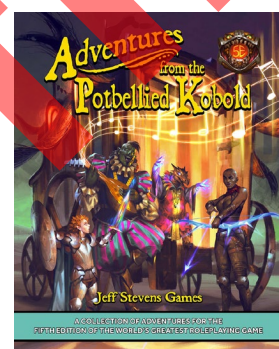
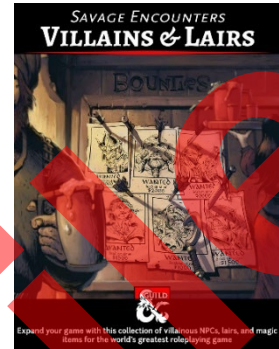
With this section, I wanted to give the character a choice in their progression. If they want to continue adventuring as a monk, they can now help protect their companions.

Or they may choose to ascend to the form of the owlbear. I'm not certain how many will choose the ascension, but I thought it sounded like a lot of fun.

CHARACTER DEATH

Since I felt this tradition created a strong bond with the owlbear and nature, I wanted it to be special. Owlbears devote a lot of love to family, so I thought it was fitting that there would be an owlbear death ceremony for the character. I think being the recipient of an owlbear death ceremony would be the highest level of ascension and the true capstone of this tradition.

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