

Monster ENCyclopedia: Eblis

This is a series of articles about specific monsters from D&D's history. Each entry takes a look at the origin of one D&D creature, and tracks its appearances and evolution across different editions. This entry covers one of the creatures associated with the Trickster Gods of Omu in *Tomb of Annihilation*: the eblis. It originally appeared along with a number of other creatures in a combined *Tomb of Annihilation* article.

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Origins

In the Quran, Eblis (or Iblis) is a figure cast out of heaven for refusing to prostrate himself before Adam. Although he is somewhat analogous to the Devil, Iblis has a more ambivalent role in Islamic tradition. How the name Eblis came to be associated with an evil giant stork is unclear.



Shoebill and marabou stork, images from Wikipedia

In form, the D&D eblis probably drew inspiration from either the shoebill or the marabou stork, both of which are large and intimidating birds. The shoebill is a five-foot tall bird with a large shoe-shaped bill that hunts large fish, eels, snakes and even occasionally baby crocodiles. The marabou stork is also five feet tall and has the red head of the eblis. It is a scavenger, eating mainly carrion and feces, and is sometimes known as the “undertaker bird”

1st Edition

The eblis first appear in *EX2: The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*, the second of two Alice in Wonderland-themed adventures. As the author of *EX2*, the credit for the creation of the eblis belongs to E. Gary Gygax. In this adventure, eblis are servants who say silly things at the Queens' Mad Feast, but fortunately this daftness doesn't carry over into their “New Monsters” appendix description.



EX2: The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror (1983)

Eblis are 8-foot tall, evil-natured bird-men seldom seen by humans. They resemble giant storks with gray-brown feathers and black legs, and are sometimes called storkmen. Males have red-brown heads and black necks. They dwell in tropical and subtropical swamps, and construct well-hidden huts of reeds and grasses. Each hut typically houses a mated pair and possibly young or an egg. A community consists of 2-8 huts and up to 16 individuals. Most habits cannot support a large group, so a community growing beyond this size will split, with the younger eblis leaving to find a new home together. Eblis are very rare creatures, of varying intelligence (low to exceptional) and neutral evil alignment.

Eblis love shiny objects, and may have accumulated jewelry or magic items in their nests in addition to random pieces of glass and metal. Typical treasures include metal scroll tubes, potions, rings, small miscellaneous magic items including daggers and knives, and metal jewelry.



EX2: The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror (1983)

In combat, eblis are fast, both to dodge and to strike. They have a low armor class (AC 3), and can make four stabbing attacks with their powerful beaks (each doing 1-4 damage). They have reasonable hit points (4+4 HD) and their dampness gives them a small bonus to saves against fire. Each community also has one member able to cast a small number of illusionist spells by means of dancing and vocalization. Available

spells are *audible glamor, change self, hypnotism, spook, wall of fog, blur, hypnotic pattern,* and *whispering wind*. A spellcaster will know 2-8 of these, and can cast the spells it knows once per day.

The eblis appeared again in the *Monster Manual II* later the same year, but the text is nearly identical to that in *EX2: The Land Beyond the Magic Mirror*. The only additional information in the stats block is that they have maneuverability class “C” when flying. This is average, comparable to a gargoyle or a harpy.



Monster Manual II (1983)

The article *Adventure Among the Clouds* in *Polyhedron #28* details the ecology of cloud islands (such as the one in *UK7: Dark Clouds Gather*). Typical residents include eblis, but they are likely to have carefully hidden colonies, unknown to other inhabitants.

Dungeon #8, has a group of nine eblis nesting among steam vents on the Sparock Peninsula. They are loyal to Ancagaling, a red dragon who brought them to the region and hostile to a nearby fog giant and his gnoll minions, of whom they have killed several. Eblis also appear in the random river encounter table in *The Shrine of Ilsidahur* in *Dungeon #10*.

2nd Edition

The eblis update to 2nd Edition is low-key; it gets no new art, and shares an “Avian” sheet in *MC11: Monstrous Compendium Forgotten Realms Appendix* with the boobrie and the flightless bird. The statistics block notes that eblis are found in subtropical swamps, they are carnivorous and a group of eblis is a flock. Not all eblis grow to be 8 feet tall; this is a typical maximum height.

As in 1st Edition, they live in huts made of straw and grass. The shiny things they are so fond of collecting are woven into their dwellings as decoration. So fond are eblis of shiny treasures that even the most powerful of their kind can be bribed by a suitably impressive jewel. The description here stresses the cruel nature of the eblis and the delight they take in hunting and killing, especially if they see travelers with desirable shiny goods. They are cunning enough to ambush suitable targets. Their evil nature is blamed on their spellcasting leaders, whom some scholars believe gain their power as a result of some malefic deed, and who then encourage cruelty in common eblis.

The eblis language is described as a spoken language of chirps, whistles, and deep-throated hoots. It can be understood but not spoken by a trained listener. Some spellcasting eblis are also able to speak rudimentary common. The explanation for the eblis resistance to fire is revealed to be a result of protective oils, secreted to coat their feathers.

When it reappeared in the *Monstrous Manual*, the eblis was relegated to an even smaller entry on the “Bird” sheet, along with a couple of dozen other avians.

3rd Edition

There were no official 3rd (or 4th Edition) eblis, but *The Tome of Horrors* comes to the rescue with a d20 conversion. This was based on the version in [ENWorld's Creature Catalog](#).

5th Edition

For 5th Edition, the *Tomb of Annihilation* does away with illusionist leaders, and gives all eblis some minor innate spellcasting (*blur*, *hypnotic pattern*, and *minor illusion*, all once per day). Eblis are said to be the reincarnations of evil humans, punished for acts of larceny and kidnapping. They are self-serving creatures who use their abilities to make other creatures do their bidding, and delight in luring humanoids to unexpected deaths.



Tomb of Annihilation (2017)

Some of the characteristics from earlier eblis echo through here. They still collect shiny treasures which they hide in their grass and reed huts. They also remain 4 HD creatures, but now make only two beak attacks (each for 1d4+3 damage), instead of four. They have a slightly faster fly speed (40 ft.) than walking speed (30 ft.)

The text notes that they are capable of manipulating objects with their beaks and feet. These eblis are also more linguistically capable than their ancestors, and can communicate in both Auran and Common. Perhaps the most surprising development in 5th Edition is that the letter “s” in eblis is suddenly silent. *Tomb of Annihilation* gives a pronunciation of EH-blee, which contradicts *Dragon #93*’s earlier suggestion of EB-lis.

Eblis parts

Dragon #137 pegs the value of an eblis egg at 250 gp, and that of a young eblis at 300-500 gp. Both had depreciated somewhat by 2nd Edition, as *FRM1: The Jungle of Chult* prices eblis eggs at 50 gp, and their young at 250 gp. The human tribes of Chult also hunt the eblis for food and their feathers.

Forgotten Realms

Eblis featured in *MC11: Monstrous Compendium Forgotten Realms Appendix*, and popped up not far from Waterdeep in an adventure in *Dungeon #72*. In that adventure, the eblis leader tries to lure passing adventurers onto a path where the remaining eblis can ambush them from within tall grass. *Faiths & Avatars* notes that the goddess Leira sometimes sends eblis to her followers as a sign of her favor.

FRM1: The Jungle of Chult dedicates a page to an eblis settlement. One eblis functions as the settlement’s sentry, watching for passing goblins, human hunters and dinosaurs. If a dinosaur approaches that the sentry thinks the flock can’t handle, he signals his companions to take to the trees. When adventurers approach, the eblis are cunning enough for their spellcaster to *change self* into a human hunter pretending to be injured. They hope to draw their opponents into the center of the village for an ambush.



Papazotl’s symbol, *Tomb of Annihilation* (2017)

In *Tomb of Annihilation*, there are eblis serving as sentinels and spies for the medusa Zalkoré. The Omu god Papazotl takes the form of an eblis, and is bitter enemies of Kubazan, the frogemoth god. *The Turtle Package* supplement indicates that eblis are found on the Snout of Omgar, an island off the southeastern coast of Chult.

For the Kara-Tur region, eblis appear in the encounter tables for tropical/sub-tropical swamps and freshwater in the 1st Edition *Oriental Adventures*.

Greyhawk

Eblis must be found on Oerth, as there are eblis egg shells in the adventure *By the Wayside* in *Dungeon #19*. Like so many other unusual creatures, eblis are also found on the Plane of Silly and Unused Monsters in *WG7: Castle Greyhawk*.

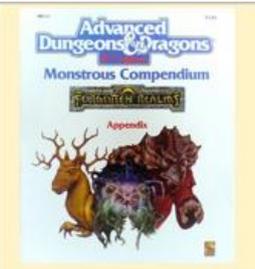
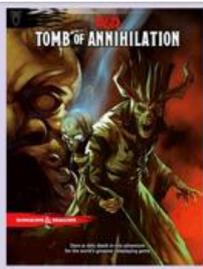
Historical Reference

The Dark Continent in *Dragon #189*, includes eblis as suitable residents of an African-themed campaign.

Mystara

In the Mystara setting, eblis can be found in the swamps of Karameikos, according to *Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure*.

Comparative statistics

			
Edition	AD&D (1st Edition)	AD&D 2nd Edition	D&D 5th Edition
Source	<i>Monster Manual II</i>	<i>Monstrous Compendium Forgotten Realms Appendix</i>	<i>Tomb of Annihilation</i>
Size	M (8' tall)	L (8' tall)	Large
Type			Monstrousity
Alignment	Neutral evil	Neutral evil	Neutral evil
No. Appearing	4-16	4-16	
Armor Class	3	3	13
Hit Dice/Points	4+4	4+4	26 (4d10+4)
Speed	12"/12" (C)	12, Fl 12 (C)	30 ft. fly 40 ft.
Abilities	Int Low to exceptional	Int Low to exceptional (5-16) Morale Champion (15-16)	Str 11, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 11
Senses			Passive perception 14
Attacks	4	4	Beak +5 melee
Damage	1-4	1-4	Beak 5 (1d4+3) piercing
Special Attacks	Illusionist magic	Illusionist magic	Innate spellcasting
Special Defense	Bonus to saves vs. fire	Resistant to fire	
XP	165 + 5/hp	650	Challenge 1 (200 XP)
Treasure	25% of scroll, potion, ring, small miscellaneous magic item, magic dagger, or 1-4 jewelry	Coins and gems	

References

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[Monster Manual II](#), p62 (August 1983)

Dragon #93, p26, Ay pronunseeAYshun gyd (January 1985)

[Oriental Adventures](#), p114 (October 1985)

Polyhedron #28, p7, Adventure Among the Clouds (March 1986)

Dungeon #8, p39, The Wounded Worm (November 1987)

[WG7: Castle Greyhawk](#), p78 (January 1988)

Dungeon #10, p5, The Shrine of Ilsidahur (March 1988)

Dragon #137, p16, Treasures of the Wilds (September 1988)

Dungeon #19, By the Wayside, p12 (September 1989)

[MC11: Monstrous Compendium Forgotten Realms Appendix](#) (December 1991)

Dragon #189, p13, *The Dark Continent* (January 1993)

[*FRM1: The Jungles of Chult*](#), p47-49 (May 1993)

[*Monstrous Manual*](#), p27 (June 1993)

[*Karameikos: Kingdom of Adventure, Explorer's Guide*](#), p126 (July 1994)

[*Faiths & Avatars*](#), p94 (March 1996)

Dungeon #72, p74, *Mistress on the Mere* (January 1999)

The Tome of Horrors, p122 (November 2002)

[*Tomb of Annihilation*](#), p75, 78, 93, 97, 107, 131, 218-219 (September 2017)

[*The Turtle Package*](#), p5-6 (September 2017)

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