

THE HYDRAIL



BIG BAD

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HITPOINT
PRESS

JANUARY 2021

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THE HYDRAIL, MIGHTY MOLLUSK

Magical monstrosities are often born from a combination of foul magic and neglect. The powerful magical energies found in dungeons, wizard towers, and lich lairs can create potent effects on the natural denizens of their environment, down to the most humble creature. The Hydrail was once an ordinary garden snail; an ochre jelly and a spill from a carelessly dropped potion bottle set in motion a magical growth that would soon be irreversible.

The Wizard Lymnus. The Hydrail is the name given to the transformed snail by its accidental creator, a wizard by the name of Lymnus. Lymnus went on a grand magical adventure, leaving his tower neglected for several months. Upon his return, he found his laboratory in complete disarray, with his collection of potions and spell components scattered and spilled all over. At first suspecting incompetent burglars, he discovered that his tower had become inhabited by a large, twisted snail the size of a large house cat. The strange creature, seemingly hungry for magical materials, had made itself at home. With five heads and doleful eye stalks, not to mention a glittering shell coloration, Lymnus dubbed the creature “the Hydrail,” as it appeared to be some strange combination of snail and hydra.

When Lymnus discovered that the snail’s mucus had potent alchemical properties, he decided to conduct experiments on it. He fed the snail magical waste: leftover potion ingredients, remnants from crafting magical items, a worn-out spell component pouch, and so on. The Hydrail got stronger—its shell repelled magical effects, and its mucus became an even more powerful potion reagent. The stronger the Hydrail became, the larger it grew.

A Minor Threat...at First. Lymnus, driven only by self-interest in the Hydrail’s alchemical slime, continued to feed and grow the unusual creature with careless abandon. For a time, he maintained a symbiotic relationship with it, but once Hydrail reached the size of an average bear, Lymnus began struggling to control the creature’s meal times. As a precaution, Lymnus began designing a magic *salt knife*, specially made to stop the Hydrail, but the creature’s increasing aggression and fierce protectiveness of the laboratory and its contents made construction of the knife impossible.

After one particularly harrowing encounter in the stockroom, in which the Hydrail nearly bit Lymnus’s arm right off his shoulder, the wizard decided to cut his losses and abandon the tower to the mutated snail. He took his notes, experiments, and the plans for the *salt knife*, but in his haste (and fear of the Hydrail), Lymnus left behind enough magical remnants for the snail to feed on for quite some time. Alone, the Hydrail gorged itself, growing ever larger and developing new magical abilities.



**SLOW...
& DEADLY!**

Unpredictable Growth. The Hydrail continued to feed and grow until the abandoned tower could no longer provide for it. When its food sources ran dry, the Hydrail began to wander the countryside in search of its next meal.

Caravans, traveling mages, and natural magical sites were its most common targets, but as the Hydrail got closer to more civilized areas, a new source of food arose. Oozes and slimes, creatures born of alchemical waste, proved to be an excellent source of the magical energies it craved. This new diet allowed new abilities to manifest, the toxic oozes building up the Hydrail's resistances to even the most potent poisons and acids, as well as turning its spit into a corrosive, deadly liquid. As it has grown larger and larger, small oozes and slimes have begun living inside its shell—a convenient food source and a convenient defense against intruders.

Attracting Opportunists. Where there is a storm cloud, there is always a silver lining; villagers in areas that have been ravaged by the Hydrail as it searches for magical food have begun harvesting the snail's mucus in the aftermath. The mucus sells for a high price, as it can be used to strengthen potion recipes, making them more effective or more durable. Even the acids and poisons the Hydrail spits can be used to deter pests or diluted into strong cleaning agents.

As such, a small band of alchemists and apothecaries follow the Hydrail's rampage, warning villages and towns to evacuate ahead of its arrival, but never interrupting the snail, lest they lose their primary source of profit.

There are also adventurers and explorers who recognize the Hydrail's hunger can lead them to areas of dense magical energy, undiscovered dungeons, and abandoned magical relics. Those who simply follow in the wake of the Hydrail are seldom endangered; it seems to ignore those who gather mucus and acid or simply watch the snail to see where it goes. Those reckless few who have attempted to tame or ride the Hydrail faced much more painful fates. None have yet dared to stand between the monstrous snail and its next meal.

Other Experiments. Despite Lymnus's best efforts, intrepid adventurers and scavengers discovered his abandoned tower and learned the truth of how the Hydrail came to be. Those who consider the Hydrail's existence profitable, and those too foolhardy to know their own limits, have attempted to recreate the circumstances of the twisted snail's creation, capturing garden snails and intentionally feeding them magical components. Most of these feeble creatures do not survive the overwhelming energies of the arcane runoff, and so the Hydrail remains unique in its size and power.

Salt in the Wound. The wizard Lymnus has successfully created his design of the *salt knife* in an attempt to stop the destruction that the Hydrail—a product of his own greed—has caused. Unable to accomplish this himself, Lymnus has started sponsoring adventuring groups to destroy the Hydrail, so far without success.

The source of the Hydrail's most fearsome power—the ability to regrow heads, just like a true hydra—comes from a regenerative organ located within the upper portion of its shell. For every head the Hydrail loses, it continues to grow two more until this organ is destroyed. Unfortunately for those who would fight the Hydrail, the organ is only accessible by climbing into the shell itself, which is now approximately 20 feet long, 20 feet wide, and over 30 feet tall.

Once the regenerative organ is located within the shell, it must be destroyed using the *salt knife*: a specially enchanted dagger with a blade forged entirely out of crystalline salt. After the organ is destroyed, the Hydrail no longer regenerates heads, allowing it to be fought with significantly more ease. The Hydrail is not a fast creature, despite its magical nature, so speed and tactics can bring it to heel.

ROLEPLAYING THE BOSS

The Hydrail has developed greater intelligence than the common garden snail it once was, but it is still nowhere near sapience. It is driven entirely by an endless hunger for magical (and occasionally mundane) food. As such, the Hydrail travels to places with great magical auras and vast amounts of accessible food.

The massive snail may be drawn away from a meal by the clever use of bait. The lurer must take care not to get caught too close to the trap or bait that they set, however, as the Hydrail is not a particularly cautious eater.

THE HYDRAIL'S TACTICS

The Hydrail seldom strikes first, only becoming violent when drawn away or distracted from the meal at hand. It avoids close-quarters combat when possible, preferring to spit slimes and fungi at its foes from a distance. The Hydrail knows that its shell protects its vital organs, so the nearest hostile is likely to be attacked first. The Hydrail has deadly accuracy with its spit attacks, only biting as a last resort.

When the Hydrail reaches a quarter of (or less than) its maximum hit points and starting number of heads, it withdraws into its shell to wait out the assault. Many an adventurer has mistaken the withdrawn Hydrail for an empty shell, only to realize their mistake too late.

Few foes expect the mighty roar of the Hydrail, as it is otherwise nearly silent. Though it is capable of gliding along quietly, if sufficiently provoked it unleashes a terrifying roar that can frighten enemies. The Hydrail typically does not roar until already engaged in combat, and not until foes have gotten close enough to suffer the full effect. Due to its size, the Hydrail's roar can be heard from a great distance, though those who are not within eyesight are rarely able to identify the noise.

THE HYDRAIL'S REGENERATION ORGAN

Hidden inside the vast shell of the Hydrail is the stony organ that allows it to grow and regenerate new heads. The regenerative energy exuded from this body part has also made it incredibly difficult to destroy.

The regeneration organ can only be destroyed by using the *salt knife*, a specially treated magic weapon that is able to pierce through the layers of built up magical energy.

The organ itself has 40 hit points, has an AC of 16, and is immune to all damage except from the *salt knife*.

Without access to the *salt knife*, options are limited for stopping the regenerative abilities of the Hydrail. Casting an *antimagic field* around the organ changes its immunity to all damage to a resistance to all damage for 1 minute, after which the organ returns to its original state.

THE HYDRAIL'S TRAITS

Ideal. “Magical food will make me larger and stronger. Magical food is the only way to be safe.”

Bond. “My only allegiance is to myself and to protecting my regenerative powers.”

Flaw. “I am insatiable and fight others for even a small scrap of magical food.”

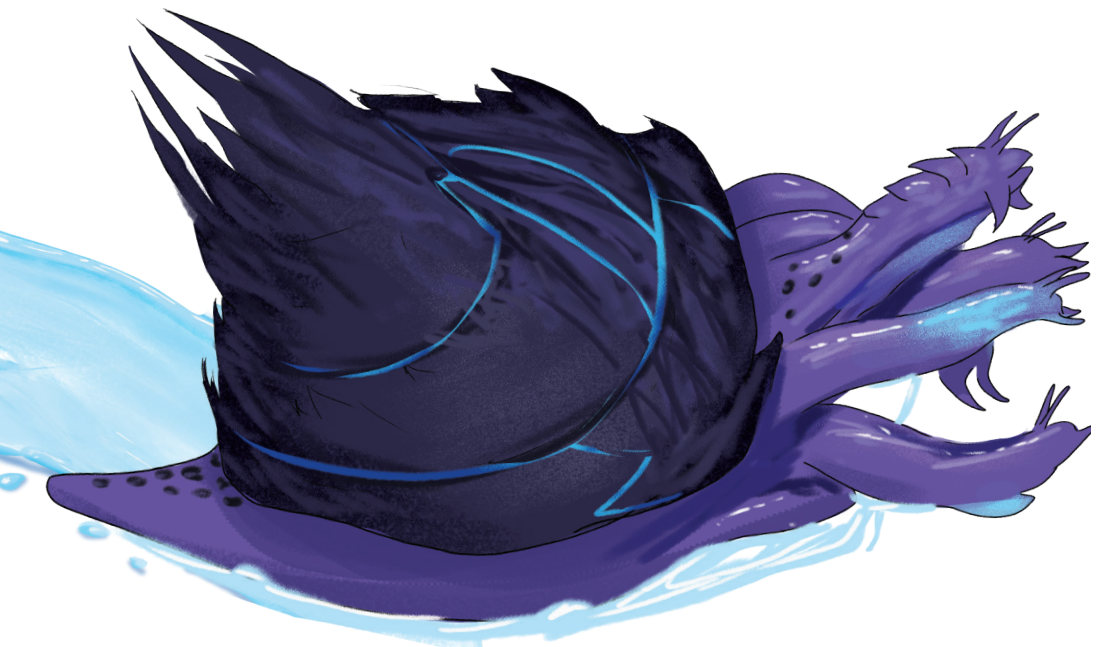
ADVENTURE HOOKS

Consider introducing the following scenarios if you wish to include the Hydrail in your campaign:

Dug too Deep. A group of dwarves have uncovered a massive source of magical power near the surface of their preliminary dig and have drawn the attention of the Hydrail. The dwarves recruit the party to get rid of the mighty mollusk, by any means necessary.

A Wizard's Mistakes. The party is contacted by Lymnus, the wizard from whose tower the Hydrail originated. He knows of the party by reputation, and he hopes that they will be able to finish what he could not. He promises great magical knowledge if the Hydrail is permanently dealt with, as he is desperate to stop the disastrous creation for which he is responsible.

The Harvest Festival. A small village conducts a large annual harvest festival, during which the town's arcanists and priests join forces to create a magical enchantment to improve the year's crops. Unfortunately, this year's festival has attracted the attention of the Hydrail, as the accumulation of magical materials for the harvest ritual have drawn it toward the village. The mayor offers a reward for anyone who can help fend the monster off or keep it away so that the harvest festival can go on as planned.



TRAVELING HOME

While the Hydrail may temporarily inhabit all kinds of dungeons and wizard towers as well as roam freely in the wilds, its true lair is the home it carries—the shell on its back. It is this shell that grants the Hydrail protection and shelter in any situation.

Multi-Chambered Shell. The shell is subdivided into three chambers, which run most of the length of the massive snail's body. Closest to the ground are two side-by-side chambers that are each approximately 15 feet long and 10 feet wide. One of these chambers is accessible from the front of the shell, near where the Hydrail's necks merge into the rest of its body, and the other is accessible from the rear of the shell.

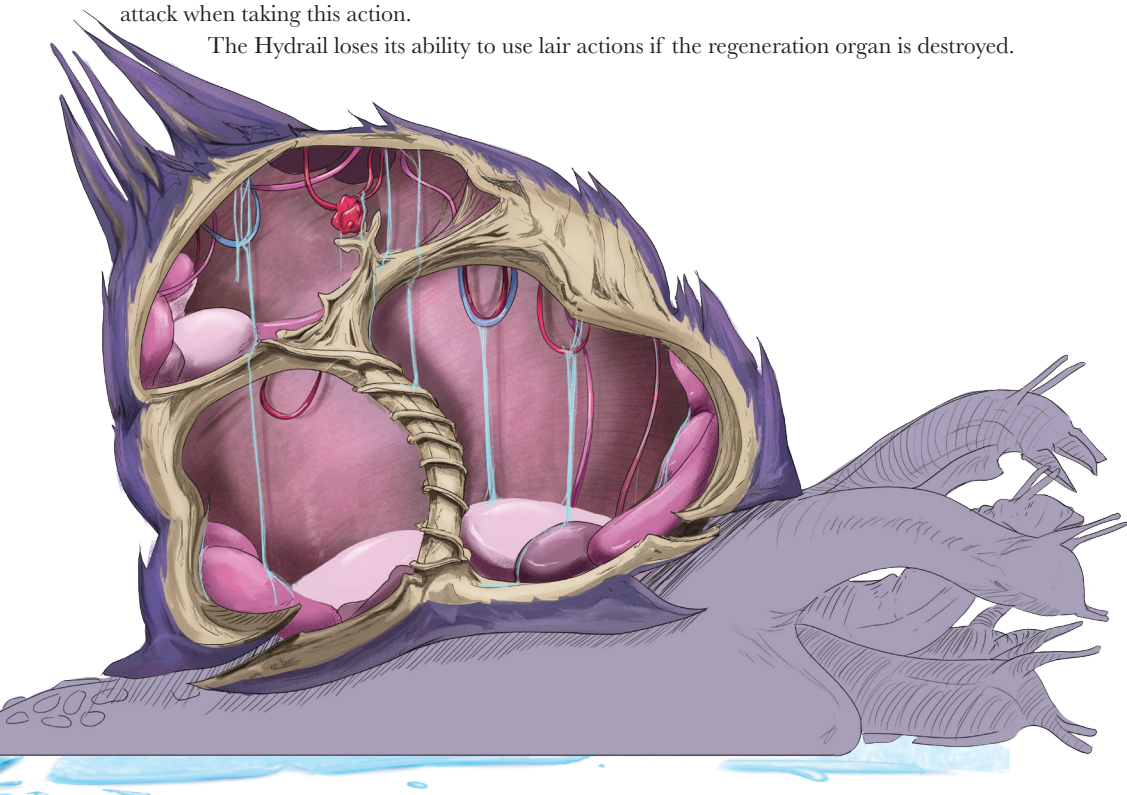
From either of the two lower chambers, it is possible to climb into the upper chamber, which is also approximately 10 by 15 feet. This upper chamber contains the regeneration organ that allows the Hydrail to regenerate its heads.

LAIR ACTIONS

When an enemy has breached the shell, the Hydrail is able to use its innate magic to take lair actions to hinder the intruder. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), it takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- The interior walls of the shell become thick with slime, causing any ability checks to climb walls within the shell to be made at disadvantage and making them difficult terrain.
- The Hydrail spawns a violet fungus or gray ooze (GM's choice) in a space within its shell.
- A new head spawns within the shell, not yet ready to emerge. The head takes the Bite action against the intruder. If the Hydrail has withdrawn inside its shell, it can make a second Bite attack when taking this action.

The Hydrail loses its ability to use lair actions if the regeneration organ is destroyed.





HYDRAIL SHIELD

Shield, rare (requires attunement)

Pieces of the Hydrail's shell can be refashioned into a shield by an armorer. While holding this shield, you have a +2 bonus to AC and have resistance to acid damage.

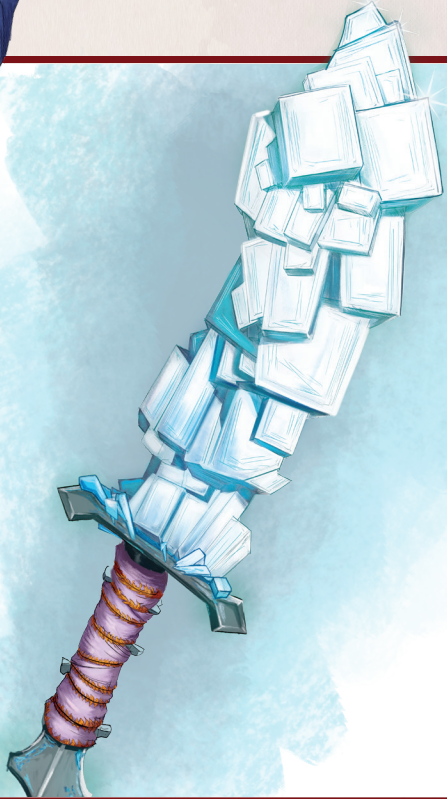
This bonus is in addition to the shield's normal bonus to AC.

SALT KNIFE

Weapon (dagger), rare

The blade of this dagger is a salt crystal enchanted with a specially designed magic ritual. This is the only known weapon that can damage the regeneration organ of the Hydrail.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.



OIL OF HYDRAIL MUCUS

Potion, very rare

When properly distilled, the Hydrail's mucus acts as a strengthener to other potions. Adding this oil to an existing potion has one of the following effects of your choice:

- The potion heals an extra die of damage.
- Effects from this potion deal twice as much damage as normal.
- Effects from this potion last twice as long.
- This potion doubles in volume, making enough for two effective potion uses.

THE HYDRAIL

THE MIGHTY MOLLUSK
Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 186 (12d20 + 60)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	5 (-3)	22 (+6)	5 (-3)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +9

Skills Perception +6

Damage Immunities acid, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned, prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages -

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Antimagic Shell. The Hydrail has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects, and any creature making a spell attack against the snail has disadvantage on the attack roll.

Death Roar. When the Hydrail dies, it lets out one final roar. All creatures within 600 feet that can hear the Hydrail must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) thunder damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

Multiple Heads. The Hydrail has five heads. While it has more than one head intact, it has advantage on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, and knocked unconscious. Whenever the Hydrail takes 25 or more damage in a single turn, one of its heads dies. If all its heads are destroyed, the Hydrail dies.

At the end of its turn, the Hydrail grows two heads for each head it lost since its last turn, unless the special regeneration organ within its shell has been destroyed. The Hydrail regains 25 hit points for each head regrown in this way.

Wakeful. While the Hydrail sleeps, at least one of its heads is awake.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Hydrail takes as many Acid Spit or Bite actions as it has heads, and it is able to split these attacks however it wishes.

Acid Spit. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) acid damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Roar. The Hydrail lets out a fearsome roar—an unearthly and frightening noise. All creatures within 300 feet who can hear the snail must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature that is within the Hydrail's shell attempts this saving throw with disadvantage. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the Hydrail's Roar for the next 24 hours.

Shell Withdraw. The Hydrail withdraws into its shell, gaining a +5 bonus to AC against attacks from outside the shell until it emerges. It can emerge as a bonus action on its turn. While withdrawn in this manner, the Hydrail can only target creatures inside its shell.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Hydrail can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Hydrail regains all spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Shutdown. The Hydrail can close off either the front or back access point to its shell, barring all possibility of access at that end. It can only block either the front or back at any given time, and shutting one down requires opening the other.

Violet Fungus Spit. The Hydrail may make an Acid Spit attack, replacing the regular damage with the creation of a violet fungus in the targeted space.

Roar (Costs 2 Actions). The Hydrail uses its Roar ability.



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