

WELCOME TO HEAVENSTEPPE

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HEAVENSTEPPE

The ancient dwarf-built city of Heavensteppe pierces the skies from the top of Mount Glintdawn, also known as the Blessed Mountain. Carved from the mountaintop's stone into a cascading series of five ringed plateaus, each steppe has become a distinct region of the city with its own function, culture, and history. Settled by an expedition of dwarven clans tasked with establishing a small outpost that could not return home, the city stands today as a literal and spiritual monument to persistence and stalwart independence. Under the city's vigilant watch from the mountaintop, Heavensteppe offers benevolent warnings to its neighbors of impending danger, but chooses to remain neutral in foreign political engagements. With its advantageous position and sturdy dwarven construction, the city serves as a bastion of economic and political autonomy.

AMBIENT MOOD

Heavensteppe's tiered layers are filled with classic dwarven masonry, majestic landscapes, and endless trade. Towering waterfalls cascade down the sides of each new steppe, turning colossal water wheels that power the city's mighty forges and industry. Although the city is no longer settled by a dwarven majority, their lasting influence can be felt everywhere through their dedication to beautiful, functional, and lasting design. Many dwarves in the city are wealthy enough to dwell upon the highest steppes, where comfortable accommodations are available within the mountain's warm, stone walls. Most traditions in the city are still based on dwarven culture, placing great importance on honesty and hard work, and even utilize the dwarvish language for its legal documents and fiscal contracts. The city feels open and exposed to the world's grandeur—typically not something coveted by dwarves—while managing to still feel safe from its dangers thanks to the city's numerous watchtowers. Within the Blessed Mountain lie new and old mysteries, including great catacombs, forges, and geothermal vents from the mountain's ancient volcanic pools.

- The view from most of the steppes is stunning, known far and wide for having vistas that will steal your breath away, although it could simply be the altitude's thinner air. Indeed, some painters proclaim that a Heavensteppe sunrise or sunset and the landscape below can never be truly captured on canvas.
- Stone architecture within the city is primarily dwarven, most notably in the upper steppes, including the Steel Hawk Towers, Vallahir Shrine, and Steel Hawk Spire at the mountain's apex. The great forges within the mountain itself are powered and cooled by tremendous, large waterwheels, which are feats of engineering all on their own. Most buildings have basements, which are usually built as comfortable living areas for the city's historical dwarven population. The designs are usually simple with harsh angles, but their quality is unmistakable as they stand resolute after centuries of use. More recent additions vary far more.
- Despite the mountain's volcanic heat, Heavensteppe is fairly chilly for most of the year, as cold breezes and the

thin air steal away precious warmth. As a result, the city's geothermal hot springs are extremely busy, and the populace adopts heavy coats and thick clothing to ward off the cold. By contrast, the warmer months rely heavily on the insulation of the primarily stone buildings to evade the blistering sunlight, all the closer and stronger due to the altitude. In both cases, fashion trends toward dwarven-style earth tones with bright or bold colored accents added by immigrant cultures' desires.

- As a general rule, daytime on the upper steppes is full of the trademark bustle and chatter of a thriving city. The Market Steppe in particular is home to marketplace barkers, craftsmen of all kinds with ringing tools, and throngs of buyers. To most, it is a welcome din, and serves as evidence of the success that Heavensteppe has accomplished over the centuries.
- The overwhelming aroma of the city's sulfuric hot springs takes some time for newcomers to adapt to, and are even at times strengthened by a changing breeze. On the outskirts however, the crisp scent of the Forest Steppe's coniferous trees reigns supreme.
- Cuisine within the city is traditionally dwarven-inspired, favoring warm and exceptionally spicy soups and stews to pair with potent dwarven ale or mead. The many immigrants to the city have brought along their own taste preferences, spurring a still-ongoing cultural revolution which has produced various sweet, spicy, and savory concoctions. As a general rule though, dwarven alcohol is still unmatched.

EXPEDITIONARY ORIGIN

Many centuries ago, an expedition of six minor dwarven clans (Bravepike, Bronzehawk, Rustforge, Slatefist, Steelfist, and Truebrand) were sent by their war-torn kingdom to Mount Glintdawn with two goals: establish a series of dwarven watch posts, and develop a system of warning to alert the kingdom of any impending danger. However, shortly after their departure, civil war between the kingdom's elite clans caused the nation to devour itself from within. Cut off from all other resources, the six clans stubbornly held their ground against the continuous onslaught of nature and weather, carving out a home upon the mount. When all seemed hopeless and it appeared all would perish from lack of air and biting cold, their prayers for divine aid seemed to be answered. From beneath the dormant volcano sprung cascading pools of hot water, making their permanent settlement possible.

As time passed, the clans carved out homes upon the Mount, taking special pride and care in the construction of a temple to their deities: the Vallahir Shrine. The clans divided their responsibilities based on their cultural strengths, allowing their numbers to grow in size and resourcefulness. Eventually, this led to the formation of the Steel Hawks: an elite force dedicated to protecting the growing outpost against threats from the outside world.

As the outpost continued to develop, eventually becoming large enough to be considered a small city, it needed to change its system of governance in order to adapt. This gave way to a uniquely competitive and wealth-based system of government: a direction far removed from the traditional

means of dwarven rule. Enterprising dwarven families saw their wealth and success grow, accumulating power and influence, but ultimately forced many of the lower caste dwarves to leave the city or move outdoors—a first for many of their kind—in search of better opportunities. This large exodus of skilled but otherwise aimless artisans led to the mining, development, and colonization of the city’s first steppes. Further, with outdoor living conditions now possible on the mountain, merchants, refugees, and travelers from neighboring regions were able to scrape out a meager living and foothold in the developing city.

In addition, a number of exceptional smiths began to congregate in the city, seeking to harness the mountain’s geothermal heat in pursuit of the finest tools, weapons, and armor. The most successful of these smiths proved to be a group of humans and elves who, when forced to cooperate in order to compete with powerful dwarven artisans, managed to devise startling new advancements in their craft. Through working together, these smiths discovered the secrets necessary to craft unique silver eagle weaponry, advancing the Steel Hawks’ martial prowess and ensuring that the Silver Eagle Forge Coalition became a wealthy and influential part of the city’s politics.

PLUTOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

When faced with the conundrum of determining who amongst the founding clans would rule, the negotiations settled on a system of merit, where those who made the best use of their resources would have the most influence. After a short time, this style of government settled into a loose caste system. Thanks to inherited wealth, upwards mobility in the system remains difficult, with most of the city’s dwarven populace trending towards the upper steppes. This would likely cause tension between the steppes, but their physical separation, ease of involvement in local politics, and even-handed treatment of immigrants has resulted in a fairly content populace.

All of Heavensteppe’s formal legal documents and decrees are written in Dwarvish before being translated for public accessibility, and most of the city’s regulatory laws are based on strict dwarven traditions. Most severe crimes such as violence and murder, as well as theft and property damage, call for removal of the individual’s name and standing, as well as banishment when necessary. The city uses red, blue, and gray for its iconography, representing the mountain’s dormant magma chambers, generous springs, and rocky landscape.

Heavensteppe relies on the Steel Hawks for protection against any internal, external, or aerial threats. The Steel Hawks are dedicated to maintaining Heavensteppe’s neutrality, but still offer advanced warning of any threats they observe from their various outposts to any neighboring cities or nations.

ECONOMICS

Trade and business within Heavensteppe are typical in many ways, though a small number of differences are worth noting.

POLITICAL RELATIONS

If you wish to include Heavensteppe and other settings from *The Griffon’s Saddlebag* in your campaign, the following settings can have close ties to Heavensteppe:

- Due to its unique placement among the clouds, many Rocborne Homes frequent Heavensteppe as part of their cyclical journeys across the skies, exchanging many of their finely crafted items or other worldly goods. Such items are typically sold at a premium, making possession of said goods a mark of high society and successful business.
- With Heavensteppe’s intense dislike for politics, the anti-mage faction known as the Justicars are not welcome within the city. Though not common, the Steel Hawks have organized task forces on occasion to root out insurgent Justicars and prevent the spread of their vile propaganda. Similarly, other covert organizations dedicated to directing or subverting governments, such as Thieves’ Guilds or the Circle of Dragons, are relentlessly ousted.

- Much of the trade and haggling within the city, especially in the upper steppes, are conducted entirely in Dwarvish, even if no one involved is of dwarven heritage. Because of the city’s history, Dwarvish is simply perceived as more legally binding than other languages.
- Because of Heavensteppe’s market-based system of government, competition between businesses is intense. Those who make sound investments and many sales are granted additional influence with the city’s governing Council, and if an individual can become more wealthy than the lowest-ranked councilmember, they earn that seat. For this reason, corporate espionage and treason are considered identical crimes.
- Although high in the mountains, the city’s size necessitates imports via caravans. Such goods are typically common targets for roaming bandits, and often enlist the help of mercenaries or, for particularly valuable cargo, Steel Hawk soldiers.

VALLAHIR SHRINE

An immaculately carved temple at the mountain’s apex, the Vallahir Shrine is a dedicated holy site for most dwarves that symbolically marks the site of the Founders’ original outpost. It’s also used by many as a temple to the dwarven gods, including other diverse gods of artisanry and order, as well as a place to give thanks for the mountain’s volcanic blessings that make Heavensteppe habitable. Many dwarves consider a trek to the top of the Blessed Mountain and into Vallahir Shrine to be a sort of pilgrimage, typically recommended for those seeking divine assistance for exceptionally difficult and serious tasks. Although the Shrine’s use has declined over the years, especially as the city’s populace trends further away from a dwarven majority, devout worshippers consider it a privilege and responsibility to keep the deities appeased with offerings lest they rescind their blessing.

A CULTURE OF CARING

The denizens of Heavensteppe are known as competitive but ultimately sympathetic people. They have never turned away refugees in their time of need, regardless of individual reasons. The few disastrous attempts to breach the city's stalwart defenses have placed Heavensteppe squarely out of reach of those with political and warmongering machinations. The city cares for each citizen, ensuring that all those within their borders have their basic needs met, though in return they ensure that individuals who can provide work or skills do so. As a whole, the city bustles with a myriad of blending cultures from across the land, unified by circumstance more than birth.

STEEL HAWKS

Known far and wide as Heavensteppe's most elite fighting force, the Steel Hawks were founded centuries ago as a joint effort between the Steelfist and Bronzehawk clans as a means to protect the fledgling outpost against the dangers of the mountain. As the outpost grew and eventually migrated outdoors, they developed a style of combat uniquely suited to navigate Heavensteppe's verticality and combat the aerial assaults from nearby creatures. Though initially composed entirely of dwarven volunteers, today the faction has grown to include individuals from all walks of life, united solely by their dedication to the protection of Heavensteppe and its people. The faction and their recognizable tower outposts have both become synonymous with vigilance and honor.

Under their vibrant red, blue, and carefully woven steel-thread hawk insignia, the Steel Hawks watch over the city's steppes and slopes, traveling with ease up sheer cliffs that other warriors balk at. The group operates in a simple hierarchy based out of their central Spire, a towering monument atop the mountain's highest steppe that offers an unparalleled vantage point. Traditionally, a commanding general presides over any number of captains, who in turn manage up to three platoons of ten Steel Hawk soldiers each. Initiation into the faction requires rigorous training and testing of mind and body, but is notably simple in its one and only oath—to protect Heavensteppe and its people.

With watchful eyes, the Steel Hawks leap across the skies with an unexpected grace, launching themselves with supernatural speed into the air to reach otherwise inaccessible heights and adversaries. In the defense of Heavensteppe, no enemy—humanoid or monstrous—has yet withstood their collective might and valor. Unlike many similar factions, the Steel Hawks work hard to keep themselves free from foreign politics and complicated situations, making them a Neutral organization as a whole. They do not operate as a group beyond the city-state's borders, though many adventurers depart from their ranks to pursue their individual quests and endeavors.

Unparalleled in aerial combat despite their lack of true flight, the Steel Hawks' unique combat style almost seems to be more of a performance than a threat—until their foes find their wings clipped. Indeed, many songs and stories are told far and wide of the enthralling 'dance' of a Steel Hawk.

In stark contrast to their swift and smooth movement, Steel Hawks maintain a balance of overall strength and dexterity, capable of jumping just as high and far while unburdened as they can fully armored and equipped for battle.

Support from the Steel Hawks can come in the following ways:

- Use of their numerous lookout posts and vantage points within Heavensteppe, as well as the ability to use their network of outposts to swiftly relay messages across distances.
- General instruction and advice on the strengths and weaknesses of common and uncommon aerial threats like dragons, rocs, griffons, and the like.
- A one-time-use favor or one or two Hawks to aid in combat against a considerable flying threat outside the city.
- Various other assistance such as access to equipment, arms, or advice.

HEAVENSTEPPE MAPS

Maps are available for free, courtesy of Cze & Peku, at thegriffonssaddlebag.com/heavensteppe.



EXPLORATION

Traveling between the various tiers of Heavensteppe requires the use of either the large, publicly available staircases, or permission to utilize one of the numerous service lifts scattered along the edge of each steppe. These lifts are primarily used to transport bulky trade goods and other imported supplies up and down the mountain, and are operated by small teams of strong laborers: some of whom may be more than willing to accept a bribe for their services.

The individual steppes were named after the original founding dwarven families, although they've become colloquially referred to by a different set of names based on their primary role in the city's infrastructure.

THE BRAVEPIKE (WILD) STEPPE

This steppe, which merges directly into the steep mountainside below, is purposely kept in a wild and natural state. The dense conifer forest provides occasional game and lumber for the city if necessary, but is also the territory of many natural predators and wandering monsters. Though not usually direct descendants, the loosely-organized Bravepike Clan acts as game wardens and rangers to ensure the ecosystem stays balanced, while also serving as the first line of defense alongside the Steel Hawks in the event of a citywide assault.

THE RUSTFORGE (FOREST) STEPPE

Although at first glance the Rustforge Steppe seems identical to its predecessor, it operates as the primary source of logging and game hunting for Heavensteppe. Wild herds of deer and goats, lakes of stocked hatchery fish, and other prey animals are curated in addition to the mountain's wolves, bears, and mountain lions. The occasional monster will climb or fly its way to this steppe, but the Rustforge lumberjacks, Bravepike Clan, and most independent laborers there will offer their help to the Steel Hawks in order to repel them.

THE STEELFIST (FARM) STEPPE

This steppe is aptly referred to as the Farm Steppe, as most of its land is plowed and planted, providing grains and produce for the city's populace. Most small villages on this level consist of simple farms, barns, granaries, and the occasional tavern for traveling caravans. A large portion of farmers on this steppe can trace their land ownership directly to the original sale or rental from when the Steelfist Clan first created the deeds. There are several Steel Hawk towers on this level to guard the cliffside, stairways, and lifts up to the next level.

THE BRONZEHAWK (MARKET) STEPPE

Full of bustling marketplaces, businesses, and homes, the Bronzehawk Steppe is the beating heart of Heavensteppe. Trade flourishes here thanks to higher population density, frequent import caravans, and commerce-oriented legislation. You can find numerous inns and taverns, bustling abattoirs and smithies, and public schools, libraries, and hot spring bathhouses. Many of the buildings here are sturdy, constructed using trademark dwarven architecture and technique during the first century of settlement here in Heavensteppe. The finest were designed and built by the legendary Bronzehawk masonic craftsmanship.

THE SLATEFIST (NOBLE) STEPPE

Access to this steppe by conventional means is much more regulated by the Steel Hawks than on previous levels, as it serves as the home to the city's upper-middle and minor noble class's manors and villas. It also features fine restaurants, couture, institutions of higher learning, artisanal storefronts, and famed hot springs and spas. In short, only the finest wares and individuals are found here. A number of the nobles here are of Slatefist Clan heritage, utilizing their ancestral wealth to leverage influence over the rest of the city. Over the centuries however, many other individuals and families have risen to join the ranks of this steppe in nobility thanks to their acute business acumen, although some foreigners have managed to simply buy their way into its elite. Visitors looking to purchase more lavish goods from the shops here or simply seeking passage to the mountain's topmost steppe are granted temporary documents permitting their visit here.

The Dwarven elite can also find special living arrangements here, as lavish stone homes are carved directly into the mountain's surface. Further, this steppe offers entrance to the Old City: the original, inner-mountain colony from before its exodus. Particularly wealthy families will refer to this steppe as The First Steppe, as it was the first area to have been leveled and settled when the founding dwarves first left the original colony.

THE TRUEBRAND (TEMPLE) STEPPE

Upon the sterling heights of the Truebrand Steppe, Heavensteppe's ruling elite hold court in their towering palace that looms above the sacred Vallahir Shrine. Here, they perform their duties as a governing body, changing in size and influence as their individual wealth and circumstances vary. Only those with an explicit invitation from the council or the Steel Hawk General can visit the court or Spire here, but everyone is given access to the breathtaking vistas that can be found on Mount Glintdawn's cloud-piercing peak. Beautifully manicured gardens, lakes, and meadows can be found around the central official buildings and temple on this steppe, making it a popular destination for special events or holiday outings.

WITHIN THE MOUNT

While most activity in Heavensteppe centers around the landmark Steppes, the inside of the Blessed Mountain is riddled with winding lava tube passages and air-bubble caverns. Exploring these areas can be quite dangerous, as many subterranean creatures and monsters call it home, and geothermal activity can occasionally alter the topography. There are a select few caverns, however, that are guarded and maintained as emergency shelters and warehouses in case of an attack on the city or a sudden influx of refugees in need of shelter. The Steel Hawks maintain a number of these passages for ease of movement across the mountain, though most denizens hear only rumors of their existence and use. The Old City as well as Heavensteppe's single prison, the Iron Enclave, are also hidden away within the mountain.

OTHER SPECIFIC LOCATIONS

Altitude Gardens is a popular apothecary on the Noble Steppe, often frequented by the city's nobles for fragrances and medicines alike, although they also serve adventurers with sufficient coin and access to the steppe. Verwick Enthar is the proud proprietor, an androgynous half-elf who inherited the business from their parents several decades ago. Since that time, they've taken good care of the property and maintained its traditional reputation of service with a smile.

Beating Heart Hospital on the Market Steppe is Heavensteppe's largest public hospital, with capacity for up to 100 patients at once. For many decades, it has operated solely based on the charitable donations of the community, providing its services regardless of an individual's social or economic standing. The Heart Medics provide this selfless service under the leadership of Head Medic Noella Gustarson, a female elf greatly beloved by her patients and staff. Noella's legs were lost in a rescue expedition, and as a result, the entire hospital is highly accessible to allow her and her fellow patients to be self-sufficient in their wheelchairs.

Devilish Delights is a lavish inn and restaurant on the Noble Steppe, used almost exclusively for traveling dignitaries or emissaries and the most wealthy traveling adventurers. The owner is Comfort, a flirtatious tiefling with debonair charm to spare. Its candelabras and rich mahogany furniture cultivate a romantic ambiance that has led to a number of stories and novels about relationship escapades behind its doors.

Goods Galore is a well-worn, somewhat bedraggled establishment on the Market Steppe. For two centuries, the Whelfstein family line has passed down ownership of the shop, providing warm service and sturdy supplies for the city's farmers and adventurers both. The shop is currently run by Johanberg, an earnest young human male dedicated to giving the shop everything he has.

Rainbow Readers is a large public library on the Market Steppe, most known for its robust children's education programs that have helped to increase literacy in Heavensteppe. Most of the records within are educational primers and copies of classic literature, making it a treasured historical and community center. Librarian Riftren Swibble, a wise and wizened female halfling, directs her fellow teachers in educating the masses. City immigrants unfamiliar with the Dwarven language come here for mandatory lessons when they apply for citizenship.

Rustforge Lumber Yard is the largest and most highly praised lumber yard in Heavensteppe, located on the southern side of the Forest Steppe. Although named for its founding clan, today the company is a complete melting pot of dedicated carpenters and lumberjacks under the direction of Chief Logger Anthruil, an aging but exceptionally fit and fierce elven male.

Steel Hawk Spire is the tallest building in Heavensteppe, constructed at the mountain's peak to give the faction an unparalleled vantage over the mountain range. Here, the faction uses their extensive network of tunnels, scouts, and trained birds to disperse orders to the individual Steel Hawk

Towers. From this central location, the Steel Hawks provide additional protection for the Shrine's clerics and the city's council members on the Truebrand Steppe.

Steel Hawk Towers are found on the Farm, Market, Noble, and Temple Steppes as well as other nearby mountain peaks, providing the faction with unparalleled visibility of the city and surrounding region. Each outpost boasts a comprehensive armory, bunks, holding cells, and other requisite supplies to keep the Steel Hawks on their feet and in the air. Most Heavensteppe towers also have secret entrances to the lava tubes below, which are used to transport prisoners and other quarries to the Iron Enclave prison without interference from or danger to unaware civilians.

The Iron Enclave is Heavensteppe's prison, located deep within Mount Glintdawn. Numerous tunnels between Steel Hawk towers lead to the Enclave so that captured criminals can be securely transported. When necessary, the Steel Hawks can use these tunnels to quickly cross areas unseen.

The Silver Eagle Forge Coalition is a collective of the finest elven and human blacksmiths, known far and wide as the crafters of the Steel Hawks' renowned *silver eagle weaponry*. The coalition currently operates under the leadership of the married couple Barthomen and Rubianna Crowfoot, a human male and elven female. Although most known for their weaponry, they also produce exquisite metalwork of all types and kinds with steep but fair prices from their forge built behind the Bronzehawk Steppe's northernmost waterfall.

The Slatefist Smithies are a collaboration of almost exclusively dwarven smiths whose lineage traces directly back to the founders. With their ancient volcano- and water wheel-powered forge located within the Blessed Mountain itself, they craft their fine metalwork in traditional dwarven form and fashion. They keep close relations with the Redsmith dwarves, who are renowned for their skillfully crafted *Redsmith hammers*. Were it not for their rivals in the Coalition, the Slatefist Smithies would have a monopoly on metallurgical work for the city's elite. The forge's activities are currently directed by the female dwarf Demetrianne Slatefist, the matriarch of all Slatefist clan members.

The Weary Bravepike is an old but sturdy stone tavern on the eastern side of the Forest Steppe and a frequent stop for caravans and other foot traffic. Constructed when a rebellious Bravepike dwarf left the clan to pursue their fortune, the craftsmanship and care put into the structure is quite clear. That dwarf's progeny, all the way to Froshka Bravepike, the current owner, have been here ever since.



REDSMITH
HAMMER

HEAVENSTEPPE ADVENTURE HOOKS

Consider including the following scenarios if you wish to include Heavensteppe in your campaign.

EXAMPLE ADVENTURE HOOK TABLE

d8	Adventure Hook
1	Something has gone wrong in one of the Silver Eagle Forge Coalition's warehouses—a cache of <i>silver eagle weapons</i> has vanished and they need help finding the culprit.
2	There's a remorhaz terrorizing the wild goats and deer in the woods of the Wild Steppe, and the Bravepike rangers are looking for aid in hunting it down.
3	A number of expensive art pieces and jewelry have been reported missing, believed to be the work of a powerful and magical thief. Although the Steel Hawks are investigating, they are not well versed in magic and seek the help of adventurers.
4	One of the Market Steppe springs has gone dry, and officials are asking adventurers to investigate the dried-up lava tube to find out why.
5	A youth traveling with their merchant parents was left behind in the chaos of their caravan's hasty departure. They need an escort down the mountain to reunite with their family.
6	One of the Rustforge lumberjacks was found dead, and clues suggest that the murderer may have been a duergar from deep below the surface. The Steel Hawks are seeking assistance in the ensuing investigation.
7	Tensions are rising between the Silver Eagle Forge Coalition and the Slatefist Smithies as they compete over the limited ore being imported, causing prices to skyrocket. Perhaps the tensions are connected to young Romarth Slatefist and Julian Crowfoot, the two eldest children of the Smithies and Coalition leading families.
8	The Steel Hawks have sighted a mysterious army heading straight for a neighboring city from one of their tower outposts. They're looking for fast adventurers to swiftly carry their warning and aid the city in its defense.

HEAVENSTEPPE DEFENSE

You can use the following table to help determine random encounters while your adventurers are aiding the Steel Hawks in Heavensteppe.

EXAMPLE HEAVENSTEPPE DEFENSE RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLE

4d6	Encounter
4	1d2 elder lava wurms (See Heavensteppe stat blocks) and 1d6 lava wurms (See Heavensteppe stat blocks)
5	1d2 chimeras
6	1d3 manticores (50%) or 2d12 flying snakes (50%)
7 – 8	1d2 + 1 alcetons (See Heavensteppe stat blocks)
9 – 11	2d3 wyvernflies (See Heavensteppe stat blocks)
12 – 13	1d6 thugs riding wyverns
14	3d4 duergar and 1d3 lava wurms (See Heavensteppe stat blocks) burst from under the ground
15	4d6 stampeding giant goats
16	An adult white dragon

EXAMPLE TREASURE

Adventurers in and around Heavensteppe can be rewarded with items based on surviving cold weather like the *adventurer's overcoat*, *boreal pendant*, and *container of heat and frost*, or dwarven and exceptional forge-crafted items like the *battlebrew maul*, *coldfire anvil*, *knocking boots*, *Redsmith hammer*, and the Steel Hawks' signature *silver eagle weapons* or *silver eagle cuirass*. Any items based on flying creatures like dragons and wyverns are also ideal.

HEAVENSTEPPE STAT BLOCKS

ALCETON

With the head of a moose, body and wings of a raptor, alcetons wander the frigid skies of northern climes and the upper echelons of snow-topped mountain ranges. Their favored prey are humanoids, especially dwarves. Indeed, some dwarven legends (especially in Heavensteppe) claim that roving alcetons are one of the foremost reasons dwarves belong below the surface.

LAVA WURM

Found most often burrowing through the igneous rock of dormant, active, or extinct volcanoes, the lava wurm is a ferocious draconic creature that lives off the rock they tunnel through. Although highly dangerous, the movements of



SILVER EAGLE
CUIRASS

lava wurms are followed as closely as possible by smiths who value them as natural smelters of the volcanic rock. The worm can expel the undigested, molten metal from their gullet when threatened or expel it as the highly sought-after slag leavings.

ELDER LAVA WURM

Occasionally, a lava wurm will live long enough and grow their vestigial wings large enough to become an elder. These creatures are an order of magnitude more dangerous than the young wurms, as their small but now functional wings allow them to more readily and swiftly follow their prey through molten rock and the open air. With their sheer bulk and love for fine granite, elder lava wurms are an infrequent but greatly feared invader of Heavensteppe, usually requiring many Steel Hawk lives to drive away.

STEEL HAWK SOLDIER

Those who serve in the Steel Hawks undergo rigorous training, making them renowned and disciplined warriors. Active-duty soldiers are typically found near their numerous watchtowers or actively facing a threat to the city, external or internal.

STEEL HAWK CAPTAIN

Experienced members of the Steel Hawks receive the rank of captain, typically signified by their receipt of a *silver eagle weapon* of their choice. With numerous battles and investigations under their belts, captains lead their platoons with valor and honor. Indeed, most captains lead their soldiers from the front line of battle, demonstrating the true prowess of a Steel Hawk in flight.

WYVERNFLY

Cousins to the more well-known and prevalent wyverns, the wyvernflies are voracious hunters with draconic cunning and supreme agility. They relentlessly track their prey through the air with keen eyesight, then sever limbs with their powerful jaws and mandibles. On rare occasions, reckless individuals have been known to tame and ride a wyvernfly, but most attempts end up as an easy meal.

ALCETON

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d10 + 16)

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+1)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Giant Elk, understands Common and Elvish but can't speak them

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Charge. If the alceton moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Sure-Footed. The alceton has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The alceton makes two attacks: one with its ram and one with its talons.

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage, and if the target is a Medium or smaller creature that is prone, it is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the alceton can't use its talons on another target.

SILVER EAGLE WEAPONS



LAVA WURM

Large dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93 (11d10 + 33)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3

Damage Immunities fire

Condition Immunities petrified

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands Draconic, Ignan, and Terran but can't speak them

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Hold Breath. The wurm can hold its breath for 30 minutes.

Noxious Resilience. The wurm has advantage on saving throws made against harmful gases and vapors (such as the effects of a *stinking cloud* or a green dragon's poison breath).

Tunneler. The wurm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrowing speed and leaves a 5-foot-diameter tunnel in its wake.

Volcanic Body. The wurm sheds bright light in a 5-foot radius and dim light for an additional 5 feet. In addition, whenever a creature enters the area within 5 feet of the wurm for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, that creature takes 2 (1d4) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) fire damage.

Molten Spray (Recharge 5–6). The wurm exhales molten metal in a 15-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a target takes 14 (4d6) fire damage and its speed is reduced by 10 feet. If a target's speed is reduced to 0 by this effect, it becomes restrained. A creature can take an action to scrape or wash off the metal, ending the effect. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and its speed isn't reduced.

ELDER LAVA WURM

Large dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 171 (18d10 + 72)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., fly 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	7 (-2)

Saves Str +7, Con +7

Skills Athletics +7, Perception +5

Damage Immunities fire

Condition Immunities petrified

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Draconic, Ignan, and Terran but can't speak them

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Hold Breath. The wurm can hold its breath for 1 hour.

Limited Flight. The wurm can only fly for up to 1 minute at a time. If it ends its turn in the air after 1 minute of consecutive flight and nothing else is holding it aloft, it falls.

Noxious Resilience. The wurm has advantage on saving throws made against harmful gases and vapors (such as the effects of a *stinking cloud* or a green dragon's poison breath).

Tunneler. The wurm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrowing speed and leaves a 5-foot-diameter tunnel in its wake.

Volcanic Body. The wurm sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet. In addition, whenever a creature enters the area within 10 feet of the wurm for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, that creature takes 3 (1d6) fire damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wurm makes two melee attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 5 (1d10) fire damage.

Molten Spray (Recharge 5–6). The wurm exhales molten metal in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a target takes 38 (11d6) fire damage and its speed is reduced by 15 feet. If a target's speed is reduced to 0 by this effect, it becomes restrained. A creature can take an action to scrape or wash off the metal, ending the effect. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and its speed isn't reduced.

STEEL HAWK SOLDIER

Medium humanoid (any race), lawful neutral

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Animal Handling +3, Athletics +5, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common plus one other language

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Bird Caller. The soldier can cast the *animal messenger* spell, but only as a ritual and only targeting a beast that has an innate flying speed.

Launch (3/Day). As a bonus action while on the ground, the soldier jumps up to 15 feet. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks, and the soldier takes no falling damage when it lands. The soldier can't use this trait if its speed is 0.

If the soldier hits a target with an attack immediately after it lands or during the leap's movement, the target takes an extra 5 (1d10) damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The soldier makes two attacks.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

STEEL HAWK CAPTAIN

Medium humanoid (any race), lawful neutral

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 150 (20d8 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	17 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +5

Skills Animal Handling +6, Athletics +8, Perception +9

Senses passive Perception 19

Languages Common plus two other languages

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Bird Caller. The captain can cast the *animal messenger* spell, but only as a ritual and only targeting a beast that has an innate flying speed.

Indomitable (2/Day). The captain rerolls a failed saving throw.

Launch (5/Day). As a bonus action while on the ground, the captain jumps up to 30 feet. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks, and the captain takes no falling damage when it lands. The captain can't use this trait if its speed is 0.

If the captain hits a target with an attack immediately after it lands or during the leap's movement, the target takes an extra 5 (1d10) damage, and it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Steel Jump (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When the captain uses its Launch trait, it can choose to jump 90 feet, instead of 30.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The captain makes three attacks.

Silver Eagle Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage. Scoring a critical hit with this weapon doesn't double the weapon's damage dice. Whenever the same number is rolled on both of the weapon's damage dice, the target takes an extra 3 (1d6) damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

WYVERNFLY

Large dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d10 + 26)

Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)

Saves Dex +7

Skills Acrobatics +7, Perception +5, Survival +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Keen Sight. The wyvernfly has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Prescience. The wyvernfly can't be surprised.

Steady Flight. While flying, the wyvernfly has advantage on ability checks and saving throws made against effects that would push it, pull it, or knock it prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wyvernfly makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws. It can use its Mark in place of one attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Mark. The wyvernfly marks a creature it can see as its prey. Until it marks a different creature, it has advantage on attack rolls against the target, and the target has disadvantage on attack rolls against the wyvernfly. In addition, its attacks against the target score a critical hit on a roll of 18–20.



STEEL HAWK

NEW CHARACTER OPTION: FIGHTER

Not everyone who can tell you which end of a sword to hold is a fighter: that title is reserved for the trained guards, valiant knights, and masterful veterans of the world, and apart from their shared expertise with weapons, armor, and combat, few two fighters are exactly the same. Fighters are focused on the honing of their skill in combat, adapting to the settings around them and developing new solutions to the challenges they face. Some choose to focus on the mastery of one particular weapon or develop keen tactical skill, whereas others rely on clever magical forces to enhance their martial prowess. Beyond that, weapon and armor preference play a significant part in determining a fighter's role. When you are a fighter, you're equipped to face the world's dangers head-on.

STEEL HAWK

Powerful, nimble soldiers from the mountain city of Heavensteppe, Steel Hawks use explosive bursts of speed to launch themselves great distances in order to reach faraway threats. Despite their often heavy armor, those who follow this archetype leap and strike with the agility of seasoned assassins, becoming every inch the fearsome birds of prey their name would suggest.

LAUNCH

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you learn to magically launch yourself with a mighty leap. While standing on a solid surface, you can use a bonus action to leap horizontally, vertically, or a combination of both, up to a combined distance that totals no more than 15 feet. For example, you can choose to leap 10 feet horizontally and 5 feet vertically, potentially allowing you to avoid a dangerous trap or barricade blocking your path. When you reach 7th level in this class, the leap's distance can total up to 30 feet instead.

You can't use this feature if your speed is 0, and if you leap completely horizontally, you still leap 1 foot off the ground. Leaping in this way doesn't provoke opportunity attacks, and if you fall immediately after using this feature, you can subtract up to 30 feet from the fall when calculating falling damage.

You can use this feature three times, and you regain all expended uses of it when you finish a short or long rest. Beginning at 7th level, you can use this feature four times between rests, and beginning at 15th level, you can use it five times between rests.

Leaping in this way can also strengthen your strikes by using the force of your momentum. If you make a melee weapon attack immediately after using Launch, you have advantage on the attack roll, and if the attack hits, the target takes an extra 1d8 damage of the weapon's type. At 10th level, this extra damage becomes 1d10, and at 18th level, it becomes 1d12. The attack can be made immediately after you land at the end of the leap or during the leap's movement.

NIMBLE LANCER

Starting at 3rd level, you are remarkably light on your feet and capable of counterbalancing even some of the most awkward of equipment. Lances have the versatile property for you while you're not mounted, dealing 1d8 piercing damage on a hit when held with one hand and 1d12 piercing damage when wielded with two. When you use your Launch feature and immediately hit with a melee attack using a lance, it counts as if you're wielding it with two hands.

If you hit a creature within 5 feet of you using a lance, you can immediately move up to 5 feet away from it, without provoking an opportunity attack from the target. You must be standing and have movement remaining in order to move in this way.

BIRD CALLER

Also at 3rd level, you learn to identify common birds by their calls, and you have advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks when interacting with any beast that has an innate flying speed. In addition, you gain the ability to cast the

animal messenger spell, but only as a ritual and only targeting a beast that has an innate flying speed.

STEEL GRACE

Starting at 7th level, wearing armor doesn't impose disadvantage on your Dexterity (Stealth) checks. In addition, whenever you make a Dexterity saving throw, you can use your Launch feature as a reaction. When you do so, you take no damage if you succeed on the saving throw, and only half damage if you fail.

EAGLE EYE

Beginning at 10th level, your attack made immediately after or during your Launch scores a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20. If you hit a flying creature with this attack, it must also make a Strength saving throw (DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength modifier). On a failed save, its speed is reduced to 0 feet until the start of its next turn.

In addition, you gain proficiency in the Perception skill if you don't already have it, and your proficiency bonus is doubled for any Wisdom (Perception) check you make that relies on sight.

PREDATORY INSTINCT

Starting at 15th level, you have advantage on initiative rolls, and when you roll initiative and have no uses of Launch remaining, you regain one use.

IMPROVED LAUNCH

Starting at 18th level, when you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack immediately after or during your Launch, it must also succeed on a Strength saving throw (save DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength modifier) or be knocked prone.

In addition, you can push yourself beyond your normal limits when you use your Launch feature. When you do, your leap can total a maximum of 90 feet, instead of 30, and you don't suffer any damage from falling until you land again. Once you use this feature, you shouldn't do so again before you finish a short or long rest. Each time you do, you suffer one level of exhaustion. You can't use this feature in this way if you're suffering from two or more levels of exhaustion.

