

The Nine Layers of the Tuárre Wilds

Layer 1: Natural Wilds

The outermost layer of the Tuárre Wilds is almost benign. It mainly consists of forested wetlands and is inhabited by skinks, goblins, water genasi, dryads, bullywugs, and other folk. Though it is a dangerous place, Lifeswallower's presence here is only rarely felt. Its outer boundary fluctuates according to slow rhythms of growth that unfold over the course of years or decades.

The landscape is periodically interrupted by long chains of up-thrusting rock. According to popular legend, these strange hills are fossilized dragons of enormous size.

Layer 2: Tainted Sheen

The surest sign of the second layer is an oily sheen that covers the water's surface. The oil carries taint, and creatures that come in contact with it are soon corrupted and mutated. In the end, they become ooze-like servitors of Lifeswallower known as *intuitives*. Despite the dangers, skinks occasionally foray into this area by travelling from tree to tree.

The outer boundary of the sheen can fluctuate very abruptly. The oily sheen seems to move as it wills, perhaps symbolizing the inexorable grasp of Lifeswallower itself.

Now and then, reports surface of a strange *Black Monolith* that appears for a time, then vanishes just as quickly.

Layer 3: Waterfall

An immense waterfall, only thirty feet high but hundreds of miles broad, divides the second layer from the third. The very landscape below the falls is highly *reactive* to the use of power. Though martial and primal powers appear to offer no offense, other power sources summon the *skest*. The stronger the power used, the greater the numbers of *skest* that appear. Little more than a fragile vessel of green glowing acid, a *skest* has only one form of attack: grab a victim then burst, killing itself and burning the victim. Though an individual *skest* poses little threat, they can be a terrifying menace in great numbers.

The waterfall's physical position has been relatively stable for hundreds of years. However, no matter what part of the waterfall is approached, a ruined watchtower is in view. Reports vary as to whether many ruined watchtowers are present, or just one, somehow omnipresent.

Layer 4: The Watching Waters

No physical sign indicates the boundary between the third and fourth layers, but the difference between the two is very real. This layer is just as *reactive* to power as the third, but no power source is exempt, and there appears to be an intelligence actively directing the reactions. In past experience, the summoned creatures or forces have included anything from *skest* to *tentacle masses* to troops of *kuo-toa*.

Layer 5: Moat of Íscarus

An impenetrable shroud of dark mist marks the boundary of the fifth layer. Deeper within the layer, the mist parts to reveal the ruined city of Íscarus. Long abandoned by its creators, the Wizards of Mnemét, the half-submerged city is now home to an aboleth enclave. It is the aboleth that actively direct the *reactive* nature of the surrounding landscape.

Ironically, it is thanks to the aboleth that so much is known about the Tuárre Wilds, for the simple reason that they keep written records. If not for the aboleth technique known as *psionic etching*, the Library would have vast gaps in its knowledge. And of course, it is only through the Library that the party knows anything of Layers 4 and beyond.

According to aboleth records, the enclave serves its own interests, not necessarily those of Lifeswallower. Apparently, aboleth politics are highly complex, with factions within factions.

A record exists of *Necrima* approaching the aboleth leadership and requesting an audience. Remarkably, the audience was granted, but what happened next was stranger yet.

Necrima exposed a flat grin, then stated with all possible austerity, "Kill all *kuo-toa*."

The aboleth court had never seen anything so audacious. The *kuo-toa* had long been useful and effective servants, easily motivated by means of their weird religion. Scores of eyestalks trained on the aboleth queen, to learn how she would handle this absurd comment.

After a deep silence, the queen replied...

"The visitor's request is granted. The visitor will be shown to Hwylsfaq station. There, you may fulfill your work, on one condition. That you be bound, by all the gods, the darker the stronger, to thereafter bypass this city and never return. If you so swear, the *kuo-toa* will be compelled to your presence."

All eyestalks swiveled back to the strange visitor.

"*Necrima* so swears." Oddly, he seemed both ecstatic and unsatisfied.

Afterwards, faction argued with faction. Eventually, the dominant view became that the queen had narrowly averted a great threat. Months later, this view was at least partially vindicated when scouts reported that *Necrima*

had returned to the swamp, but was indeed avoiding the area around Íscarus. Instead, he and his companions were seen heading directly for the Gap of Seamont.

Layer 6: The Gap of Seamont

According to aboleth records, at the geographical center of the swamp lies a deep lake. Under that lake lies a submerged mountain known as Seamont, fortress of the *behemoths*. Bound to Lifeswallower's service, the behemoths guard a portal in the caldera known as *The Gap*. On rare occasions, an aboleth envoy is required to travel this path, a rightfully dreaded assignment.

Layer 7: The Deep Rift

The Deep Rift is highly interdimensional in nature. The few aboleth that have traveled here dislike it. The domain is infused with chaos and inhabited by morphic essences that can assume demonic form. An aboleth envoy typically meets with a creature known as the Ruhk. It is only through conversations with the Ruhk that the aboleth know anything about deeper Layers.

Layer 8: The Banelight Rift

The Banelight Rift is also believed to intersect many different dimensions. The landscape is infinitely varied, much of it lacking water altogether (a terrifying thought to an aboleth). The domain is ruled by the Ruhk's race of people, who unfortunately, do not appear to keep written records.

Layer 9: The Far Rift

The Far Rift is inhabited by creatures known as *incomprehensibles*. The aboleth have made little sense of anything the Ruhk has mentioned about this domain. However, the aboleth gather that the Far Rift is the deepest of the interdimensional roots that Lifeswallower calls heart and home.