



Fig. I: On the slope above Underhill. House-style plate.

CRYPTID № 2

THE WAMPAHOOFUS

A Vermont mountain animal built lopsided on purpose, and a joke lumberjacks have been telling with a straight face for two hundred years. Here is its legend, and two ways to loose it on your table.

“Built lopsided on purpose. And the mountains have kept the joke going ever since.”

THE LEGEND

Long before Bigfoot had a footprint or a name, an English natural historian was already writing about lopsided animals. In 1646, Sir Thomas Browne recorded a folk belief that British badgers grew their legs shorter on one side than the other, built that way for running the hillsides without tipping over. Nobody can prove the two traditions are related. But when Vermont loggers started swapping stories about a mountain animal with mismatched legs two centuries later, they weren’t inventing something the world had never imagined. They were reinventing it, an ocean and two hundred years apart.

Vermont’s version has a name, a mountain, and a mechanic. The wampahoofus worked its way into lumber camp storytelling sometime in

the 1800s, when the state was cutting upward of six hundred million board feet of timber a year and loggers filled the dead hours around the fire with tall tales. It rode into that tradition alongside cousins like the rackabore and the whangdoodle, part of what folklorist Richard Dorson would later class as “fearsome critters,” a distinctly American strain of campfire zoology. Descriptions never fully agreed: a cross between a deer and a wild boar, furred in some tellings and scaled in others, colored anywhere from forest green to bright orange, with three toes or five or cloven hooves depending who told it, and in a few versions a whistle built into the tip of its tail. The one detail every telling kept was the legs: long on one side, short on the other, so the animal could only circle a mountain in a single direction. Storytellers split on which sex went which way: males clockwise and females counter, or the reverse, depending who you asked. Turn one around and it couldn’t recover; a wampahoofus caught walking the wrong way on level ground was as good as dead.

Mount Mansfield became its unofficial headquarters, largely because the mountain gave the story somewhere permanent to leave its mark: a scored, uneven track worn into a rock face that loggers decided looked exactly like generations of lopsided animals had grazed it into that shape. The Green Mountain Club cut an official trail along that same route in 1935 and named it after the creature. It’s still on the current Long Trail maps, a real hiking route named for something nobody has ever produced a body for. Ninety miles south, a group of Ludlow snowmobilers eventually adopted the same joke as a club name, the Side Hill Cronchers, proof the legend never really left. It just switched vehicles.

A design note: the real legend’s one-directional gait is a great campfire story and a rough fit for a turn-by-turn combat round: tracking which side is short, which way it’s allowed to circle, and what happens if someone shoves it the wrong way is more bookkeeping than most tables want mid-fight. We kept the flavor and built the stat block below as a broader forest-and-mountain regional monster instead of a

Mount-Mansfield-only specialist, so it drops into any hilly encounter without the homework.

For D&D 5E

STAT BLOCK

The Wampahoofus

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	12	16	2	10	6
(+3)	(+1)	(+3)	(-4)	(+0)	(-2)

Skills Athletics +5, Survival +2
Senses passive Perception 10
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **PB** +2

Sure-Footed. The wampahoofus treats steep, slippery, or difficult terrain as normal ground for movement, and it has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made to avoid being knocked prone or shoved off a ledge.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wampahoofus makes two Gore attacks.

Gore. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing. If it moved at least 20 ft. in a straight line toward the target this turn, the target must also succeed on a DC 13 Strength save or be knocked prone.

For Every Other
Game

CREATURE
CARD

The Wampahoofus

No stat lines. Just what it is and how to point it at your players, whatever system you run. Think sure-footed regional brute, not single-trail specialist.

HOW IT BEHAVES

- **A hazard as much as a monster.** Guides warn about wampahoofus country like rockslides, not predators.
- **Comic relief that can turn dangerous.** The legend is a joke. A charging animal with tusks is not.
- **Almost never seen twice.** A second sighting reads as a tall tale, or a very unlucky traveler.

WAYS TO USE IT

- **The hazing hook.** Veterans send newcomers on a “wampahoofus hunt”: real or not, it teaches the terrain.
- **The regional menace.** Drop it into any forest or mountain range your table already uses.

- **The con.** Someone claims to have bred one for its hide. It's a scam. Or a cover.
- **The campfire tale.** Let an NPC tell the full one-directional-legs legend straight-faced, even though the creature the party meets doesn't play by those rules. The gap is the joke.

DIFFICULTY DIAL

- **Scarier:** play a charge or stampede straight, regardless of how silly the legend sounds.
- **Safer/funnier:** surround it with NPCs who take that legend dead serious.

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