



Fig. I: A Snipe, perched just out of reach. House-style plate.

CRYPTID № 7

THE SNIPE

The creature everyone knows is a prank, the one they send the new kid into the woods to catch. Real folklore, a full 5E stat block, a system-neutral card, and, for the first time, rules to catch one and keep it.

“You get fooled, and getting fooled is the price of getting let in.”

THE LEGEND

Almost everyone reading this has been sent on a snipe hunt, or has sent someone else. The shape of it never changes. You take the new kid, the greenest scout, the brother-in-law on his first camping trip, and you tell him tonight is the night. You hand him a burlap sack and walk him out past the fire into the dark. You show him how to hold the bag open at the mouth of a game trail and make the call, a soft clucking down in the throat, and you tell him the rest of you will fan out and drive the snipe toward him. Then you walk back to camp, and you leave him there. Sometimes for an hour. Sometimes until he works it out and comes back cold and quiet and, in the way these things go, one of you now.

That is the whole trick, and it is older than anyone at the fire. The snipe hunt is a fool's errand, and American camps did not invent it so much as inherit it. The bones of it, send the newcomer after a thing that is not there, run back through the older folk record for centuries, and the American version is written down by the 1840s and stitched into the summer camps and the Boy Scouts by the turn of the next century. It spread the way jokes spread, hand to hand, and it stuck because it was never only a joke. A snipe hunt is an initiation. You get fooled, and getting fooled is the price of getting let in.

Here is the part the joke depends on, and the part almost nobody sends the kid out knowing. A snipe is real. Not the thing in the bag, the bird. Gallinago is an actual wading creature of bog and marsh, a stocky little shape with a bill too long for it and feathers the exact brown of dead reeds. Flush one and it does not flee in a straight line like an honest animal. It towers up jinking, a hard zigzag at speeds pushing sixty miles an hour, and it is gone before a good gun can lead it. It was so hard to shoot that the man who could do it earned a word of his own. A marksman who could take a snipe on the wing was a sniper, and that is where the word comes from, from a bird nobody could catch. So the lie has a true bottom.

The Snipe of the sack is the other one, the thing the joke actually promises, and every family draws it a little differently. Ours, the one Scoundrel keeps, is feathered down the back and scaled underneath, quick and warm-eyed and far too clever to be where you are looking, with a laugh somewhere behind its eyes about the whole business. Which leaves the only interesting question the legend keeps open. If a snipe hunt is a trick with a real bird hidden inside it, what happens to the one person who runs the hunt for true, alone in the dark, holding the bag and actually believing? The joke says nothing comes. The Codex says something does.



The Snipe

Tiny beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural agility)

Hit Points 7 (3d4)

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4	18	11	6	15	12
(-3)	(+4)	(+0)	(-2)	(+2)	(+1)

Skills Stealth +6, Perception +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP) **PB** +2

Nimble Escape. The Snipe can take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

The Snipe Is Never There. The Snipe has advantage on any check or saving throw to escape a grab, a net, an enclosure, or a similar attempt to hold it. When a creature it can see ends its movement within 5 feet of it, or attempts to grapple it, the Snipe can use its reaction to vanish, teleporting up to 15 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. It leaves nothing behind but the call, thrown so it seems to come from anywhere but where the Snipe now is.

ACTIONS

Peck. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage. The Snipe almost never uses this. It

The Snipe

No stat lines. Just what it is and how to point it at your players, whatever system you run. A small, clever, harmless animal that is genuinely impossible to catch by force, and knows it, and finds the whole thing a little funny. The threat it poses is zero. The fun it poses is high.

HOW IT BEHAVES

- **It is never where you look.** The call comes from the left. The Snipe is on the right. It is always one move ahead, not because it is fast but because it understood the game before you did.
- **It cannot be cornered.** Nets, hands, walls, closed rooms, it slips all of them. Whatever your system's version of grabbing it, rule that it does not work, and let the players feel that wall until they stop pushing on it.
- **It is not cruel and neither is catching it.** Nobody gets hurt in a snipe hunt. The stakes are pride, patience, and the willingness to be the fool. Keep it light.

would much rather be somewhere else.

WAYS TO USE IT

- **The hunt as the adventure.** The party is sent, earnestly or as a prank, to catch a snipe. Run the whole session as the dawning realization that force is useless and cleverness is everything.
- **The living lockpick.** Someone already keeps one. It fetches, it slips locks and grates, it draws the guard's eye at exactly the wrong moment. A heist crew's best and most annoying member.
- **The uncatchable witness.** The one creature that saw what happened, and the one creature nobody can bring in. Now the party has to earn its trust instead of catching it.
- **Cut it loose from the campfire.** Forget the woods entirely. Any setting has a thing everyone swears is a prank until someone runs the joke for true. Keep the shape, a lie with a real thing hidden in it, and change everything else.

DIFFICULTY DIAL

- As an obstacle, the Snipe is a comedy of failure until the players change tactics. That is the whole beat.
- Make it sweeter by having it clearly choose the person who stops trying to trap it, and usable by remembering the point is not the catching. It is what you have once

you do: a small friend that
guarantees nobody, ever, catches you.

As a Familiar / Companion

KEEP
ONE

HOW YOU CATCH ONE

You do not catch a Snipe by hunting it. You catch one by being the one who is hunted, the mark, the fool sent out with the bag. Go out alone, at night, to the edge of wild water. Hold the sack open at a game trail, make the call, and wait, honestly, patiently, without the trick, for something the whole world told you is not coming. A Snipe only ever comes to the person who was willing to be fooled and went anyway. It climbs into the bag of its own accord, looks up at you, and decides you will do.

In play: any one character can attempt this once per downtime. No roll beats it and no roll is needed, only the willingness to spend the night looking like an idiot for something that probably will not come. That willingness is the check. Most who try, a Snipe judges, and passes over. When the GM decides a character has earned one, they have one.

WHAT IT DOES FOR YOU

The Uncatchable. While your bonded Snipe is with you, when you are grappled, restrained, or hit by an attack,

you can use your reaction to vanish, teleporting up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space you can see (as *Misty Step*), automatically escaping any grapple or restraint. You can do this a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

The Snipe darts across the space between you and the threat, and in the half second every eye follows it, you are simply gone. It is the Snipe's magic, not yours, so **any character can bond one**, sword-swingers or spellcasters alike. That is deliberate: a familiar the Fighter can love.

Other-system version. However your game handles a bonded companion or a once-a-scene escape, this is that: a small ally that, a few times a day, guarantees you slip a grab, a trap, or a closing circle and end up somewhere safer. The thing nobody could catch has decided to make sure nobody catches you.

RUNNING ONE AT THE TABLE

Keep it light and keep it character. A Snipe is a comedian, not a weapon; it steals bites of food, throws its call to make people jump, and vanishes the instant anyone reaches for it except its person. It never fights and it cannot be ordered to. Play the bond as the joke

finally landing in your favor: you were the one who got fooled, once, and your reward was the one friend in the world who will never let you be the one who is caught.

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