



Winning Races: Thri- Kreen

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Often thought of as monsters, thri-kreen are a reclusive and predatory people. These ancient and distinctive creatures also have a simple yet rich lifestyle.

THRI-KREEN CULTURE

Thri-kreen have a worldview unlike that of most other humanoids. Their behavior is deeply ingrained on a biological and spiritual level. Put simply, a thri-kreen deprived of a typical upbringing would lack refinement by thri-kreen standards but could function well based only on instinctive and inborn habits and knowledge.

All thri-kreen share a sort of ancestral memory that is as much spiritual and psionic as it is physical. A portion of a young thri-kreen's capabilities is passed down the lineage, remembered on a level where body, mind, and soul are one. Thri-kreen start with advantages and develop quickly in skill and mental capacity from birth. A thri-kreen grows, physically, from infant to adult in about five years.

A thri-kreen is born into a clutch of eggs, usually in a communal laying ground among the eggs of numerous female thri-kreen. A laying ground is a secluded

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spot that also serves as a communal burial ground, since the wisdom of the dead, as well as the shelter of their empty exoskeletons, is available, in spiritual and literal form, for the newly born. As laying time approaches, a pack of thri-kreen—a wandering tribe of many smaller family units, or clutches—travels to the laying ground to lay and bury eggs. The pack returns only when hatching time is near, so young thri-kreen must often fend for themselves for a while after birth.

This post-hatching gathering is a thri-kreen's first experience of the collective—the birth clutch. Due to ancestral memory, young thri-kreen can speak when born, and they know to hunt together. They instinctively protect one another and work together to make sure as many as possible eat. This arrangement is far from egalitarian, since the strongest young work to achieve dominance so that they can receive the largest share of food and take leadership positions.

When a pack returns to a laying ground to claim its young, the little thri-kreen do not necessarily go to the female who laid them as eggs. Indeed, the young might not be claimed by the same pack. Adults take custody of young thri-kreen as they might anything else the pack claims. Personal preference, often based on an innate sense of ancestry, and dominance helps establish who takes which child. Young thri-kreen become part of their ward's familial clutch. Once a child joins a familial clutch, he or she takes a support role right away, such as preparing food and cleaning gear. While engaged with such simple responsibilities, children are also expected to learn harder jobs, such as crafting and hunting.

The Hunt

Thri-kreen see everything in terms of the hunt. In its most basic form, the hunt is the means of survival, providing food for the individual, the clutch, and the pack. But a thri-kreen defines almost every task in terms of its hunter-prey relationship. A personal duel

is each duelist's hunt for dominance or vengeance or, perhaps, thrills. Reading is a hunt for knowledge. Adventuring is a hunt for glory and riches.

A major hunt all thri-kreen engage in is the hunt for personal betterment. Thri-kreen believe that they must be strong and worthy of survival. The lazy and weak are to be reviled. It is also important that a thri-kreen's life serves to strengthen any progeny he or she might leave. Even without offspring, a successful thri-kreen strengthens his or her people from the spirit world as a revered ancestor.

A thri-kreen does not fear death. He or she fears becoming a burden or passing away without giving back to the clutch and pack. It is better to die than to fail in the personal hunt for greater and greater accomplishment. To be a forgotten ancestor is a fate worse than death.

The Ancestral Khanate

All the talk of ancestors among the thri-kreen might lead one to think that the thri-kreen imagine the dead live on in the spirit world. Thri-kreen know some of their kind go on to live among the spirits, but this is an exception rather than a rule. Individual existence after death is rare, or so the thri-kreen suppose.

When they die, most thri-kreen trust that their essence lives on in the spirit world as part of the Ancestral Khanate. This multifaceted entity holds all the knowledge and history of the thri-kreen within it. It is why, thri-kreen assert, young thri-kreen are born knowing much of what they need to survive in the world. All thri-kreen are born as extensions of the khanate, and so they have true understanding of their essential nature. Some thri-kreen can contact the khanate, augmenting natural ancestral memory, as well as drawing forth mysterious knowledge and spontaneous skill.

Khanate is the thri-kreen expression describing a semicooperative collective of numerous packs, each

with a leader known as a khan. Such a collective all but rules its territory, meeting at times to decide important issues. The Ancestral Khanate, then, is a similar collective among the primal spirits, made nearly omnipotent by its internal concordance. This primal khanate is the closest entity thri-kreen have to a shared racial deity.

Reverence for the Ancestral Khanate is not a religion—thri-kreen are not given to piety. Devotion, however, often comes coupled with increased power or survivability. That fact is meaningful to a thri-kreen. Respect for the spirits garners one primal power, just as delving into primordial mysteries can lead to elemental power. Such power makes one stronger, and it allows a thri-kreen to leave a meaningful legacy.

THRI-KREEN CHARACTERS

Although thri-kreen are eerily alien to most humanoids, few can deny that a thri-kreen ally is a mighty asset. Thri-kreen, for their part, are proud of their history and uniqueness. Most thri-kreen latch on to a subset of thri-kreen traits, not only distinguishing themselves as individuals, but also making themselves more useful to the clutch or pack.

Backgrounds

Thri-kreen have a few unusual background possibilities.

Ancestral Speaker

You have a strong tie to the Ancestral Khanate. You might have a particularly good memory and recall events that you did not witness. Occasionally, the ancestors could speak through you, imparting cryptic truths. It's likely you have a magical power, whether arcane, divine, primal, or psionic. You are expected

to be an exemplar and a teacher among your people, to honor and share your gifts. How do you take this duty? Why did you set out from your pack into the wider world? Did you anger the khan or another dominant pack mate? Have the ancestors given you a greater purpose? Can you share this goal with others or is it a secret you keep?

Associated Skill: History or Nature

Knowledge Hunter

Thri-kreen recognize that knowledge is power. Belief in the Ancestral Khanate gives the gathering



of knowledge a greater importance to thri-kreen as a people. Everything the thri-kreen learn continues to exist as part of the ancestral consciousness. A few thri-kreen take this fact deeply to heart, pursuing esoteric understanding as a way to strengthen their people. Upon learning hidden facts, such hunters usually share what they know. Knowledge hunters are also the likeliest thri-kreen to be truly philosophical or artistic. Why have you become a knowledge hunter? What have you learned so far? Where might these rumors and tidbits lead you? Have you learned something that puts you or your pack in danger?

Associated Skill: Arcana or Dungeoneering

Merchant Hunter

Your pack gave up the hunt for survival and undertook the hunt for wealth and, perhaps, power. Your khan might have seen that the way for continued existence lies in trade. If you live in the wild, your pack's warriors might be brigands and traders who raid and rob to gain goods to sell. Or your pack might occupy a successful position in a city or trading outpost. What is your place in thri-kreen society and the wider world? Do you still have ties to your pack, or have you gone into exile for some reason? Is the new direction your pack has taken a good thing, or is it a perversion of thri-kreen custom? Do you still serve pack interests?

Associated Skill: Diplomacy or Insight

Thri-Kreen Feats

Thri-kreen develop by focusing their attention on aspects of their selves, whether physical, mental, or spiritual. Each thri-kreen becomes an inimitable expression of its kind, changing in ways other humanoids might find hard to imagine. The following feats are available to any thri-kreen who meets the prerequisites.

Thri-Kreen Antennae

You have honed your senses as only a thri-kreen can, making your most distinctive sensory organs more than vestigial.

Prerequisite: Thri-kreen

Benefit: You gain a +1 feat bonus to Perception checks and Insight checks. You also have blindsight 1. Further, you always know what direction you are facing.

Thri-Kreen Scuttler

Your six limbs and long form are perfect for low crawling. Being prone is little hindrance for you.

Prerequisite: Thri-kreen

Benefit: When you take the crawl action, you can move at full speed instead of half speed.

Thri-Kreen Scuttling Master

You have mastered the art of stealthy hunting, and you can scuttle away from enemies who have engaged you.

Prerequisite: 11th level, Thri-Kreen Scuttler feat

Benefit: You can shift while prone. While you are prone, you do not take the -5 penalty to Stealth checks for moving more than 2 squares.

Thri-Kreen Shooter

You can use your middle limbs to wield a light crossbow or hand crossbow.

Prerequisite: Thri-kreen, proficiency with the light crossbow or hand crossbow

Benefit: While you wield a melee weapon using your upper limbs, you can use a light crossbow or hand crossbow wielded with your middle limbs to make ranged attacks. Ranged attacks you make in this way do not provoke opportunity attacks.

Thri-Kreen Thrower

Your middle limbs are useful for holding and throwing light weapons.

Prerequisite: Thri-kreen, proficiency with a light thrown weapon

Benefit: While you wield a melee weapon in your upper limbs, you can use light thrown weapons wielded in your middle limbs to make ranged attacks. Ranged attacks you make in this way do not provoke opportunity attacks.

Thri-Kreen Weapon Master

The sacred weapons of the thri-kreen are like deadly extensions of your body.

Prerequisite: Thri-kreen

Benefit: You gain proficiency with the gythka and the chatkcha. Additionally, you gain a +2 feat bonus to damage rolls with these weapons. This bonus increases to +3 at 11th level and +4 at 21st level.

Thri-Kreen Wild Talent

Thri-kreen can be naturally psionic. You have emphasized this quality and acquired a wild talent cantrip (see the *DARK SUN Campaign Setting*).

Prerequisite: Thri-kreen, Psionic Augmentation class feature, *thri-kreen claws* racial power

Benefit: You gain one wild talent cantrip of your choice. Additionally, once per encounter, you can lose a use of your *thri-kreen claws* power as a minor action to regain 1 power point.

Thri-Kreen Utility Powers

The insectile thri-kreen are distinct from other races in more than appearance. Every thri-kreen has latent traits derived from its unique physiology, nonmammalian heritage, or ancient bloodline. Any of these attributes can be awakened with enough focus, giving individual thri-kreen surprising and unique capabilities.

Like thri-kreen feats, thri-kreen racial utility powers help you emphasize your race beyond the traits you gain due to your race at first level. Taking a racial utility power means your character has awakened a talent latent in all thri-kreen due to their heritage. Your character must be a thri-kreen to gain and use thri-kreen powers. If you want to further emphasize your race, consider taking a thri-kreen racial paragon path.

Gaining a Racial Utility Power: Racial utility powers are similar to utility powers granted by a class, except that you must be a member of the race to gain and use a race's powers. Whenever you gain a level that grants you a utility power from your class, you can choose a racial utility power in place of a class power. The racial utility power must be of the same level as or lower in level than the class power you would have gained.

You can use retraining to replace a class power with a racial utility power or vice versa, as long as the new power is of the same level as or lower in level than the replaced power. You cannot replace a utility power from a paragon path or an epic destiny with a racial utility power.

Spellbooks and Racial Utility Powers: If you take a racial utility power, you do not add any wizard utility powers to your spellbook at that level. If you later use retraining to take a wizard utility power in place of a racial utility power, you do not add any powers to your spellbook.

Level 2 Utility Powers

Mantis Jump

Thri-Kreen Utility 2

You coil and spring instinctively, covering a tremendous distance without much effort.

Encounter

Move Action

Personal

Effect: You jump a number of squares equal to your speed. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Pheromone Release

Thri-Kreen Utility 2

Although imperceptible to most creatures, your pheromones have a significant effect on the behavior of other creatures.

Encounter ♦ Charm

Minor Action

Personal

Effect: You gain a +5 power bonus to the next Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check you make before the end of your next turn. You can also gain this bonus to Nature checks made to calm or influence a beast.

Level 6 Utility Powers

Chameleon Chitin

Thri-Kreen Utility 6

Your powerful mind can rapidly change your exoskeleton to match the light and objects around you, allowing you to gain the advantage or slip away from the fight.

Encounter ♦ Psionic

Minor Action

Personal

Effect: You make a Stealth check. If you have any cover or concealment, you gain a +5 power bonus to this check. You can remain hidden without cover or concealment as long as you make no attacks and you take no action that requires you to make another Stealth check.

Mantis Dodge

Thri-Kreen Utility 6

The attack comes from far enough away that you react instinctively to leap away from its brunt.

Encounter

Immediate Interrupt Personal

Trigger: You are hit by an area attack or a ranged attack against your AC or Reflex.

Effect: You take only half damage from the triggering attack and can jump up to half your speed. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Level 10 Utility Powers

Antennae Sense

Thri-Kreen Utility 10

Your antennae are sensitive enough to pick up vibrations around you, giving you a clear picture of your surroundings for a moment.

Encounter

Minor Action Personal

Effect: You gain blindsight 10 until the end of your next turn.

Special: If you have the Thri-Kreen Antennae feat, you can use this power as an immediate reaction when you are blinded or otherwise deprived of sight.

Insect Mind

Thri-Kreen Utility 10

Your instincts take over as your higher mental functions fail you.

Daily ♦ Psionic

No Action Personal

Trigger: You start your turn dazed, dominated, stunned, or unconscious, and you have at least 1 hit point.

Effect: You ignore the triggering effect until the end of this turn.

Special: If you have the Thri-Kreen Wild Talent feat, you can sustain this effect until the end of your next turn by taking a minor action and spending 1 power point.

Level 16 Utility Powers

Hive Consciousness

Thri-Kreen Utility 16

You extend your mind through your antennae, uniting the minds and senses of your allies with yours.

Daily ♦ Psionic

Minor Action Close burst 10

Target: You and each ally in the burst

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, each target cannot be flanked and gains a +2 power bonus to saving throws. Unless a creature or an object is invisible to or hidden from all targets, it is invisible to or hidden from none of them. Each target also gains telepathy 10 until the end of the encounter, but can use this telepathy only on other targets of this power.

Special: If you have the Thri-Kreen Antennae feat, each target also gains the benefit of that feat while the effect lasts.

Kinetic Chitin

Thri-Kreen Utility 16

Reacting to an impact, your exoskeleton temporarily hardens.

Encounter ♦ Psionic

Immediate Reaction Personal

Trigger: You take damage.

Effect: You gain resist 10 to all damage until the end of your next turn.

About the Author

Chris Sims has played roleplaying games for thirty years, and he has helped produce games for more than ten. He recently returned to Wizards of the Coast as a technical editor for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game. Before that he spent his days at his home office in the Seattle exurbs, working as a freelance editor, developer, writer, and blogger. You can read Chris's "Analysis Paralysis" blog at critical-hits.com, and you can follow @ChrisSSims on Twitter.

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