The Environment - v.1

The Wilds are the dangerous regions of the world where the primal forces reign. Explorers, adventurers, and heroes travel into this strange realm of elements, often in search of lost ruins, forbidden knowledge, or in the service of grand quests. There are many dangers to exploring the Wilds, and not just from predators and monsters.

There are a wide variety of biomes that span across a world, from the sun-parched deserts to dense jungles to the plummeting temperatures of the artic. Each environment offers unique dangers when exploring and traveling through it, strange flesh-eating diseases might be found in a swamp while avalanches can be found on the winter slopes of great mountains. These biomes are dangerous for the foolhardy and ill-prepared but can be conquered by those in tune with nature and its primal energies.

The rules provided here are to help you make the Wilds come to life.

Aquatic

Rolling waves and deep currents, oceans and lakes are dangerous environments that are home to the normal and the abnormal. Miles of uncharted landscape exists hundreds of feet below the surface, with thousands of strange forms of natural life prowling the darks, seeking their next meal. In these crushing depths, adventurers could explore sunken ships, visit sea-elf cities, or bring the fight to the vicious sea devils.

Extreme Pressure

When an unprotected creature swims to depths greater than 1,000 feet, every 10 minutes they must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or suffer 1 level of exhaustion as the ocean depths press on them. The DC begins at 10 and increases by 1 for every 10 minutes that pass.

When an unprotected creature swims back to the surface, upon reaching the surface they must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or become poisoned as they suffer from decompression sickness. The DC is equal to the total depth that they swam down divided by 100, so that if a creature swam to a depth of 1200 feet, they would need to succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw.

A creature can automatically succeed on this check if they move at half speed when they ascend to the surface. A poisoned creature can repeat the saving throw after they finish a long rest, ending the condition on a success.

Arctic

Freezing temperatures and brilliant sunlight reflect off the ice and snow. This biome is home to the howling wind, snowy plains, and frozen rivers all decorated in piles of snow. When describing this environment, one can call forth images of piercing white light and describe a quiet world as the snow absorbs most sound. Outsiders appear like glaring targets in the snow as they lack the natural adaptations that many other creatures have, like having white fur.

Movement

While moving through snow or across ice, creatures treat it as difficult terrain, having to drag their feet through thick piles of snow or slowly move across the ice to not fall.

Ice

A creature can move safely across ice by only moving a number of feet up to half their speed each turn. If a creature moves faster than that, they must succeed on a Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone at the end of their movement. A typical DC for this check is equal to half the number of feet the moved, rounded down.

This means that if a creature has a speed of 30 feet and moved 25 feet, they would have to make a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check at the end of their movement or fall prone. If a creature moves 30 feet and then dashes for another 15 feet, they would have to succeed on a DC 22 check to avoid falling prone.

Snow

When moving through snow, a creature must spend a number of feet of movement per foot of snow for every 1 foot it moves. This means that if the snow is 3 feet deep, a creature must spend up to 3 feet of movement for every 1 foot it moves.

A creature can, as an action or bonus action, attempt a Strength (Athletics) check to move faster through the snow, briefly ignoring the difficult terrain provided by the snow until the end of their turn. A typical DC for this action is equal to 10 plus the depth of the snow in feet, with 3 feet of snow having a DC of 13.

Tracking

Creatures leave tracks behind in the snow while they are moving, making it much easier to track them. Tracks left in the snow rarely fade away unless they are melted away, fresh snow covers them, or a creature takes great pains to cover their tracks. When tracking a creature, or creatures, through the snow, the DC to track them is much easier than tracking them in other biomes.

Tracking through the snow starts at a DC 5 and is adjusted by different effects, per the chart below.

Environmental Effect	Effect on DC
Snowed since the tracks were left	+2 for each inch of snow, roll 1d6 to randomly determine how many inches fell
Multiple creatures left tracks	-1 for each creature that left tracks
Tracks in the snow have begun to melt	+5 for each day that the snow has been melting for
Tracks are old	+2 for each day since the tracks were left

Deserts

Deserts are great expanses of barren landscapes where little precipitation occurs. This created a hostile environment for plants and animals, let alone for outsiders who are not used to these extremes. Often a desert features an extreme, that of extreme heat or cold. Cold deserts, known as tundras, can be covered in snow and ice, while hot deserts often feature sand or rocks with little to protect one from the burning sun above.

Extreme Weather

Extreme cold and heat are covered in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. If you'd like to increase the difficulty of traveling in extreme conditions, you could use the following rule.

If a creature finishes a long rest after spending 8 hours or more traveling through extreme weather the previous day, they must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, they are unable to gain the benefits of a long rest but instead gain the benefits of a short rest.

If a creature traveled through extreme cold or heat, and is resistant or immune to cold or fire damage respectively, they automatically succeed on this saving throw. The DC increases by 1 for each day they travel in extreme weather.

Magical Food

When all else fails, creatures can often rely on druids or clerics to create magically created food or water. These foods are bland and unappealing with the lingering taste of magic causing most to become sick of these foods in just a few days. When a creature subsists solely on magically created food or water, they must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw to force themselves to continue eating the food. The DC begins at 1 and increases by 1 for each day that they eat magical food.

If a creature fails the saving throw, their body is unable to take it anymore and they gain no benefits from consuming the magical food or water for the day. If they consume non-magically created food or water, the DC to consume magical food lowers by 1 for each day that they do so.

Starvation and Thirst

If a creature is unable to drink enough water or consume enough food, they begin to slowly die. A creature can survive a number of days without water and a number of weeks without food, this amount of time is equal to a creature's Constitution modifier (minimum 1).

If a creature goes a number of days without drinking water, or weeks without eating food, they must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature loses 1d4 hit dice, while on a success, they lose half as many. A creature continues to make this saving throw every day, with the DC increasing by 1 for each day that they go without enough food or water. Once a creature's number of hit dice is reduced to 0, they die.

If a creature has not had enough food and water, they make the saving throw with disadvantage. These lost hit die slowly return once a creature has had enough food and water. Upon finishing a long rest after meeting their needs, they regain 1 hit die. They continue to regain 1 hit die for each day that they finish a long rest and get enough food and water. A *greater restoration* or similar magic restores all lost hit dice.

Lost hit dice does not reduce hit points, but rather can't be used when resting. Creatures first lose hit dice they spent to regain hit points during a rest.

Forest

Forests are often filled with large trees, thick underbrush, and lots of wildlife. Forests can exist almost anywhere, though they rarely do well in extreme temperatures unless they have adequate nutrients and water to feed the inhabitants as most plants and animals can adapt to harsh weather given enough time.

Density

When traveling through a forest or jungle, the density of plant life can cause issues with seeing further ahead. Being able to see is based on how densely packed the vegetation is and the available light. A creature is unable to see further than the encounter distance in the chart below, though they may hear creatures further away.

Density & Light	Encounter Distance
Sparse vegetation / bright light	200 feet
Moderate vegetation / dim light	60 feet
Dense vegetation / no light	30 feet

Movement

Moving through the forest can be simple if it is well-tended too by a local village, or if it is located in remote regions, it could be so overgrown as to make travel almost impossible. Undergrowth can grow thick, creating difficult terrain and providing half cover to all creatures walking along the ground through it. If a creature is following a path through the forest, they do not treat it as difficult terrain or gain cover.

Overwhelming Natural Noises

Thanks to how densely packed a forest can be, and just how loud some creatures are, it can be difficult to hear trouble before it happens. A creature not making noise or moving has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks to remain unnoticed so long as they have cover.

Hills & Mountains

Hills and mountains present difficult passage for those looking for an easy journey as they rise for dozens to thousands of feet up. Most hills are easy to move across, though they might be covered in forests or be composed of sand. Mountains are much tougher to overcome with many falling hazards.

Chasms & Cliffs

Chasms are deep fissures in the earth that are easy to spot, and thus easy to avoid. When they block a path though, they can be difficult to cross as they may have a raging river crashing below or be so steep that it takes several days to climb down and then up on the other side, making it so that it is impossible to bring over wagons or pack animals.

Chasms are often 2d10 times 10 feet deep and 1d20 times 5 feet wide. They are thousands of feet long, making the prospect of going around them a long and tedious journey. If a creature wishes to climb up and down cliffs, chasms, or rock walls, they can attempt a Strength (Athletics) check. The DC starts at 15 and is adjusted by the table below.

Environmental Effect	Effect on DC
Sheer or smooth walls	+10
Craggy or gentle sloops	-5
Wet or slick stones	+5
No rope or anchors to tie on to	+5
A clear path down with pitons put in place	-10
A hard path down with pitons put in place	-5

Sizing up the Climb

A creature can spend an hour examining the wall and then succeed on an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check to find the best route down the wall. The DC is the same as the DC to scale the wall and on a success, they have advantage on the check to climb the wall.

Thin Atmosphere

High altitude is already covered in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, but if you'd like to increase the difficulty of traveling in thin atmospheres, you could use the following rule.

If a creature finishes a long rest after spending 8 hours or more of traveling through altitudes of 10,000 feet or higher above sea level the previous day, they must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, they are unable to gain the benefits of a long rest but instead gain the benefits of a short rest.

If a creature becomes acclimated to the thin atmosphere, by spending at least 30 days in the high altitude, they automatically succeed on the saving throw. The DC increases by 1 for each day that they travel in high altitude and thin atmospheres.

Plains

On vast plains of grass and wildflowers, extreme conditions are rarely present. Dangers from the natural world rarely emerge, instead, it allows outsiders to be caught by surprise by the predators that claim the plains as their home. Plains are flat expanses of land, sometimes as valleys or plateaus near mountains. There is little change in the elevation and travelers can often see the curve of the earth if they are on a large enough plain.

Tornadoes & Strong Winds

It's not uncommon for plains to be blown by heavy winds that can knock large creatures over. Strong winds are already covered in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* but there can be more dangers to them.

A tornado acts like Strong Wind from 1d4 x 1000 feet away, but as it gets closer, its effects increase. Once a tornado is within 1000 feet, all ranged weapon attack rolls automatically fail and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing take a -10 as well as disadvantage.

A creature who starts their turn within 1,000 feet of a tornado must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take bludgeoning damage as debris is scattered around. The DC and damage are based on how close a creature is to the tornado, per the chart below.

Proximity to Tornado	Damage	DC
751-1,000 feet	2d4	5
501-750 feet	3d4	8
251-500 feet	4d4	10
101-250 feet	5d4	13
0-100 feet	6d4	15

A tornado takes its turn at initiative count 20, losing any ties, and moves 10 to 50 miles per hour with an average speed of 30 miles per hour or 265 feet per round in a single direction. A tornado is often 500 feet wide. A creature can notice a tornado when it is 1d6 + 2 miles away (1 mile = 5,280 feet) and a tornado can move 1 mile in 2 minutes.

A creature that ends their turn within 100 feet of a tornado must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or be dragged up to 1d10 x 5 feet towards the tornado's funnel. A creature that attempts to move away from a tornado must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or fall prone and be dragged up to 1d10 times 5 feet towards the tornado's funnel. A creature that touches a tornado's funnel must make a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be picked up by the tornado and is restrained.

If a creature starts their turn picked up by a tornado, they must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 6d6 bludgeoning damage, or half as much damage on a successful save and moved 1d10 times 10 feet along the tornado. At the end of a creature's turn, they can repeat the Strength saving throw, ending the restrained condition and landing on the ground within 1d6 x 5 feet of the tornado, taking falling damage for every 10 feet they are deposited away from the tornado and landing prone.

Swamps & Marshes

Swamps and marshes are known for being found in low areas where water has accumulated with little flow. Thick mud, high humidity, and lush plants can be found in the typical swamp with buzzing insects a standard for most. Frogs and fish make their home in the muck and mud, as well as other dangers.

Movement

Moving through the muck of a swamp isn't easy and creatures treat the ground as difficult terrain. It takes 2 feet of movement to move 1 foot in most sections.

If a creature is in deep bogs, they sink 1d4 feet and gain half cover if they are Medium or smaller. In addition, it requires 3 feet of movement to move 1 foot. These deep bogs are typically 15-feet by 15-feet and can be noticed by anyone proficient in the Survival skill.

Pestilence

The chance of catching diseases increases dramatically while a creature is traveling through marshes and swamps. If a creature finishes a long rest after spending 8 hours or more traveling through a swamp or marsh, they must make a Constitution saving throw against a random disease.

Available diseases can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* in chapter 5. Additional diseases can be found at DumpStatAdventures.com - Virulent Diseases.