

DEADSPINES

Among the Tamer community, there are rumors of a beast most fearsome, a basilisk that many have tried and failed to cull. A hulking, mutated beast covered in crimson spines and sporting an extra pair of glowing, hateful eyes, Deadspines- as it is known- is more cunning and vicious than even the worst of its already ill-tempered kin. Preferring to hunt in the dead of night, it stalks its prey closely, moving with surprising dexterity to ambush the unwary. Often unheard and unseen until it draws close enough to strike, it is not Deadspines' fangs or claws that are its most fearsome weapon, but its burning, red eyes.

Though most every hunter knows that to meet eyes with a basilisk means instant petrification, one's once-living tissue turned to hardened stone, Deadspines' mere glance brings about a far worse fate, and it is this which has earned the beast its reputation. The beast's gaze does not fully petrify its victim, but instead affects only the blood, hardening and expanding it until it erupts from the victim's body in rapidly-freezing torrents, a grotesque lattice of crimson-red spikes. Whatever painlessness, whatever mercy existed in mere petrification is

gone from this method, as the unfortunate victim feels every agonizing moment until their inevitable and dramatic demise.

It is from this horrific power that Deadspines earns its name, but what cruel act of uncaring nature would spawn such a beast? The answer, in truth, is that it hasn't. The basilisk is affected with the curse of vampirism, and though the vile affliction could not fully take hold over this being, it has changed the beast irrevocably all the same. Its horrific visage, its horrible crimson glare, these are all the product of some cruel quirk of fate, and as inconceivable as the possibility of such a thing is, the true nature of Deadspines is, as of yet, unknown to most. Nevertheless, there have been many attempts made at tracking and destroying the beast, though the tales of what have become of its victims have rather understandably deterred all but the most determined hunters. For those who discover its secrets and at long last bring the beast low, the rewards are great- but so in the risk of agonizing death beneath a heartless, crimson stare...



Artwork by Edward Yorke

DEADSPINES

Medium Monstrosity, Chaotic Evil



Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d8 + 39)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (0)	8 (-1)

Proficiency +3

Saving Throws Dex +4, Wis +3

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Four Eyes of Malice. Deadspines has advantage on saving throws against being blinded.

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If Deadspines fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Spider Climb. Deadspines can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Deadspines has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Deadspines makes two attacks: one bite and one spiked tail attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Spiked Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Malign Gaze. Deadspines looks at a creature within 30 ft. of itself. It must succeed a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or erupt in spines, taking 14 (4d6) piercing damage and is restrained until the end of Deadspine's next turn. When the creature fails its saving throw, each creature within 5 ft. of it takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage.

Crimson Eyes of Malice (1/short rest). Deadspines uses its Malign Gaze at any creature in a 30 ft. cone.

Deadspines can only use this action if it has less than half of its total hit points remaining.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Deadspines can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Deadspines regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Lurk. Deadspines makes a Dexterity (Stealth) check to hide.

Move. Deadspines moves up to half its movement speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Raging Tail. Deadspines makes a tail attack against a creature that hit Deadspines with an attack since the end of Deadspine's last turn.

Bite (2 Actions). Deadspines makes a bite attack.

Stubborn Gaze (2 Actions). Deadspine uses its Malign Gaze against a creature that succeeded its saving throw against Deadspine's Malign Gaze since the beginning of Deadspine's last turn.

Tuz's Fearsome Foes: Deadspines



Artwork by DM Tuz

LAIR: DEADSPINES' DEN

Deadspines, as a nocturnal creature, lurks within its lair during the day. Deadspines' den can be a cave, an ancient ruin, or similar hold which provides protection from the sun. It can be identified by pieces of crimson rock spread around its entrance. Once entered one is sure to find Deadspines' victims: gruesome remains of impaled bodies, kept upright by the many crimson spikes that sprout from its body.

LAIR ACTIONS

When fighting in Deadspines' Den. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Deadspines takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects.

- Deadspines moves up to half of its speed and hides.
- If hiding, Deadspines moves up to its speed without revealing itself.
- Deadspines feeds on one spike-ridden corpse in its den and regains 14 (4d6) hit points.
- Deadspines uses its Malign Gaze against a spike-ridden corpse in its den. It explodes and each creature within 10 ft. of it must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (4d4) piercing damage on a failed save and half as much on a successful one.

DEADSPINES TACTICS

Deadspines will make use of its stealth and spiderclimb to lay in ambush and attack groups of hostile creatures with its Malign Gaze to effect as many creatures as possible. If discovered beforehand, Deadspines will fight, preferring to use its gaze against groups of creatures and using its multiattacks to devastate creatures that become restrained by its gaze.

When reduced to below half of its health, Deadspines will retreat, either into its den, or if already there, deeper into it where Deadspines to hide and attempt another ambush. After its initial retreat, Deadspines will fight to the death.

Deadspines will use Crimson Eyes of Malice as a tool to allow its retreat, or as a devastating attack for its second ambush.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Investigating Deadspines before leaving for their hunt may mean the difference between success and failure for the players. Let your players roll Intelligence (Investigation), Intelligence (Nature), Charisma (Persuasion), or other skills that you deem appropriate to learn more about Deadspines the basilisk. Different skills used for gathering information may yield different pieces of information being accessed.

Easy: DC 10 – Deadspines is a notorious basilisk that none of the local monster hunters were able to take down. It is said that its lair is littered with the bodies of countless hunters. Deadspines' reputation has grown so much that local hunters straight up refuse to take on jobs targeting basilisks of any kind in fear they might encounter Deadspines.

Intermediate: DC 13 – Only vague descriptions of Deadspines exist since people rarely survived encounters with the beast. Apparently it is a crimson basilisk with four eyes and adorned with menacing spikes. It remains within its den during daytime and prowls the surroundings during the night.

Intermediate: DC 13 (Arcana) – It is most likely the case that Deadspines' is an altered basilisk, either afflicted by a curse or mutated through the reckless use of magic. It would be wise to assume the creature's body might have other unexpected magical properties. Maybe some of them can be used to create unique equipment?

Intermediate: DC 13 (Nature) – Reports of Deadspines' appearance differ greatly from common basilisks. It features additional eyes and sprouts crimson spines. Despite basilisk's girth, Deadspines appears also to be much more nimble and stealthy than its regular kin.

Hard: DC 15 (Investigation or Persuasion) – Either through finding an obscure report of a survivor, or meeting a survivor themselves, the group learns that Deadspines' gaze does not cause a creature to turn to stone, but instead to violently sprout crimson spikes from their body, impaling themselves and any unsuspecting creature around it. This is the true origin of Deadspines' name.

Hard: DC 15 (Arcana or Medicine) – After learning of the information above, one can conclude that the gaze of Deadspines causes a creature's blood to suddenly petrify and erupt from their bodies. There must be something unique to Deadspines' eyes to cause this gruesome effect. *[The players will learn that they can harvest Deadspines' eyes to create magic items out of them.]*

Impossible: DC 20 – By thorough investigative work and research, the player concludes that based on Deadspines' habitat, hunting patterns, and unique abilities, it must have contracted a form of vampirism. It is impossible to tell how this came to be. The closest way to label Deadspines is a basilisk dhampir.

DM TUZ NOTE: DEADSPINES'S GAZE

One might recognize that despite Deadspines being categorized as a basilisk, that it lacks the typical basilisk gaze trait. In summary, the classic basilisk's gaze would slowly petrify each creature it makes direct eye contact with. Creatures could avoid their gaze from the basilisk to be save from its gaze, but in turn be effectively blinded for the basilisk. Deadspines' gaze on the other hand effects a creature whether they look at Deadspines' or not and is a trait that requires an action to function. This way, it can still use its gaze while lurking in the shadows.

Based on this, one is right to assume that a fight with Deadspines is very different from fighting a common basilisk, which would be correct. But allow players to still make use of tactics that prevail against Deadspines' ilk. Using stealth or invisibility will rob Deadspines of targets to use its gaze against. Blind Deadspines or cover its eyes to make it impossible for it to see anything. Or perhaps make use of a mirrored surface to redirect its Malign Gaze right back at the beast for devastating effect!

PLOT HOOKS

While hunting dangerous monsters that threaten local settlements are no unusual task for hardened adventurers, consider weaving some additional story around the task of hunting Deadspines to captivate your players and ground the task within your world. In the following are a few easy plot hooks to integrate Deadspines naturally into your game.

The Daring Artificer – A local artificer has been fascinated with the strange basilisk Deadspines. Such a magnificent specimen must be dissected and studied. Particularly the eyes of such a beast must have some magical properties. If the group accepts the task of the artificer they will share part of their research on the beast (provide the group any information that a DC 15 Arcana and Nature check would yield), but will demand the eyes of the beast, meaning the group will not be able to acquire the Thirsty Visage.

Heartbroken Vampire – While the group rests at night, one of them is visited by a shade in the middle of the night. With hushed tones the being tells the group of Deadspines the basilisk and offers them good coin (or another other plot relevant reward) in exchange to its death. The shade is a vampire whose partner's coffin was hidden within a cave. Unbeknownst to them the basilisk Deadspines claimed the cave in their absence. When the vampire was destroyed and returned to their coffin to rest, they were defenseless against basilisk's voracious appetite. The partner was destroyed for good, the basilisk transformed into the reviled Deadspines, and the vampire was left heartbroken over the loss of their beloved. Let the group be their tool of revenge.

TREASURE

Deadspines' den is a trove of trinkets and valuables left behind by hunters who were bested by the beast. Many common weapons, armor, and ammunition can be found throughout the den, left where they fell since the basilisk has no use for them. At your discretion you can have the players discover some *uncommon* magic items among the equipment. Consider having the players roll on Magic Item Table A and B, as they find magic equipment among the loot. As additional reward, you may also have a character at the local settlement task the players to find out about a hunter's fate who left to slay Deadspines and never returned and offer an enticing reward in exchange of closure.

Players who excelled in the information gathering about Deadspines may learn about the unique properties of the basilisk's body. This will open the option for the players to have the remains of the basilisk be fashioned into equipment.



Deadspine Darts
- Artwork by DM Tuz

Breaking off the basilisk's crimson spines creates potent darts that are still infused with Deadspines' unique magic. Doing so yields the group 2d4+2 **Deadspine Darts**.

Deadspine Darts

(rare dart, consumable)

These magical +1 darts cause a creature to sprout crimson spikes upon injury. When you hit a creature with a dart, it must succeed a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save a creature takes 4d6 piercing damage and each creature within 5 ft. of it takes half as much. Once a dart injures a creature, it loses its power.



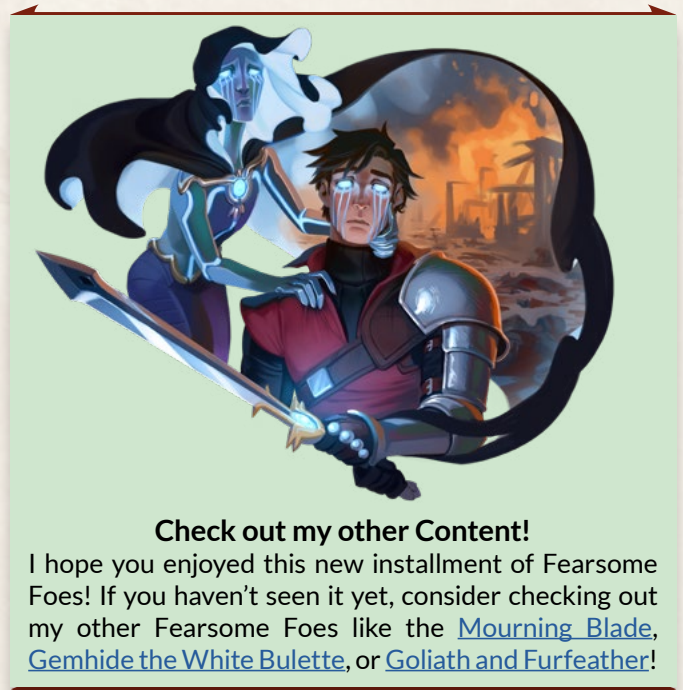
Thirsty Visage
- Artwork by DM Tuz

Salvaging Deadspines' eyes allows the players to fashion them into a unique magic item. If you deem the group lacking the capability to do this themselves, offer them the help of a powerful magic user to do it for them.

Thirsty Visage

(rare wondrous item, requires attunement)

This mask bears the four malign eyeballs of Deadspines. While wearing this mask, you can see whether or not a creature has blood flowing through its body or not. This mask has four charges. As an action you can expend one charge and force a creature within 30 ft. of you that you can see to make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure a creature takes 4d6 necrotic damage and you regain hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt. With each charge expended, one of the four eyes closes. At the dawn of each day the Thirsty Visage regains 1d4 charges.



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