

Dragon, Scintillating Landragon (Drogas radiatas)

by Ronald Hall (from "Landragons; Wingless wonders of a faraway land", Dragon Magazine #74)

FREQUENCY: Very rare

NO. APPEARING: 1 (10%: 1-6, family group)

ARMOR CLASS: 1

MOVE: 12"

HIT DICE: 2-12

% IN LAIR: 20%

TREASURE TYPE: D

NO. OF ATTACKS: 2

DAMAGE/ATTACK: up to 1-8/6-36

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Breath weapon

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Fear at -3 (see below)

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard

INTELLIGENCE: Low to average

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

SIZE: L (up to 45' long)

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

Attack Defense Modes: Nil

LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: **

This land dragon has a more muscular body than the flying types, with an agile, snake-like neck and a short, thick tail. The dragon's scales are luminescent and iridescent; its body is colored in rainbow tones that sometimes seem to ripple across the scaly surface. The scales have a soft glow of their own, which intensifies the "moving rainbow" effect and actually turns the dragon's appearance into a sort of natural weapon.

The dragon's strange appearance will entrance some adventurers. Upon sighting the dragon, all humanoids must attempt to save by rolling their intelligence or less on d20, with a -3 modifier to the die roll. Those failing this roll will either run away in panic (if the roll would have failed without the adjustment) or stand entranced by the flashing colors. Those thus enraptured will continue to watch the dragon until they are attacked or until the dragon moves out of view.

The entrancing effect will be negated if victims are forcibly turned to face away from the dragon or blinded in some way (a hood, for instance) and kept from viewing the dragon for one round. Likewise, it takes one round for characters to "snap out of it" after the dragon leaves their viewing area. But if an entranced character is attacked, the trance is broken immediately. The entrancing effects of the dragon's scintillating hide can only "charm" a character upon first glance (when the saving throws are rolled). Those who make this saving throw will not be affected as long as the dragon remains in viewing range. However, a new round of saving throws would be required if the dragon moved out of, and then back into, viewing range.

This land dragon is not unintelligent and will usually attempt to eat or disable immobile, entranced victims (attacking at +4 against such defenseless creatures). The scintillating dragon sees humans as a good source of protein as well as a threat to its own existence, and will attack a human-dominated group with virtually no provocation, unless the dragon senses itself to be vastly outclassed. The beast seldom seeks out civilized areas for its depredations, but will if its

normal sources of food are depleted. Anyone who ventures into the home ground of a scintillating dragon is considered, literally, fair game.

As with other members of this genus, the growth of this species is slow but sustained. At the time of hatching, a young dragon is only 6' long (including the tail). Growth for the first 60 years of the dragon's life is at the rate of 1 foot every 2 years, to a length of 36' at age 60. Then the dragon's growth slows to 1 foot every 10 years, to a maximum length of 46' attained at 160 years of age. Individuals of the species have reportedly lived to age 200

The scintillating dragon's abilities in all respects are reflected by its size, with damage, hit dice, and hit probability increasing as body length increases. A newly hatched dragon has 2010 hit points, a bite that does 1-6 points of damage, and a tail that does no damage. As the dragon grows it gains 1 hit die for every 4 feet of growth.

At 16 years of age (14' in length), the dragon's bite damage increases to 2-12 points and the bludgeon-like tail is strong enough to do 1-2 points of damage. This is also the age when the dragon acquires its breath weapon capability. With every 8 feet of additional growth, the bite damage increases in damage by 1d6 and the tail by 1 point of damage at the maximum (skipping the ranges of 1-5 and 1-7). The beast's breath weapon ability increases as a function of hit points, in the manner described following the table.

SCINTILLATING DRAGON GROWTH TABLE

Age (yrs.)	Hit dice	Damage: Bite	Damage: Tail	Length
0-7	2d10	1-6	0	6'-9'
8-15	3d10	1-6	0	10'-13'
16-23	4d10	2-12	1-2	14'-17'
24-31	5d10	2-12	1-2	18'-21'
32-39	6d10	3-18	1-3	22'-25'
40-47	7d10	3-18	1-3	26'-29'
48-55	8d10	4-24	1-4	24'-27'
56-79	9d10	4-24	1-4	28'-31'
80-119	10d10	5-30	1-6	32'-35'
120-159	11d10	5-30	1-6	36'-39'
160-200	12d10	6-36	1-8	40'

The breath weapon of the scintillating dragon is a shimmering beam of energy, 10 feet wide and with length equal to five times the length of the dragon (up to a maximum of 230 feet). The presence of the beam is practically undetectable; the beam itself is invisible, but when it is in use the affected area resembles thousands of glinting dust particles in a strong beam of light. Damage is computed by rolling one d6 for each hit die the dragon has (up to 12d6), with a saving throw vs. breath weapon for half damage. The dragon can use this breath weapon up to 3 times per day.

The damage from this breath manifests itself in an unusual form. Only half the damage is felt immediately (round down), as "burn damage." The remainder appears over the course of the next two days (half of the remainder each day) as the victim gradually weakens (losing 1-3 strength points each day) and breaks out in large burns. Non-magical healing from these wounds doesn't begin until the fourth day after infection and proceeds at only half the usual rate. Magical healing applied on the day of the attack heals only half the damage rolled for at the time

of the healing, but the remaining half of regained hit points will be applied against the delayed damage.

Only after the victim's healing is completed (by magic, time or a combination of the two), the victim may become aware of the worst effect of this insidious ray: Short of the use of *Regeneration* or a *Limited Wish* spell, not all of the damage done by the breath weapon will heal. Permanent damage to a victim is reflected in a reduction in the victim's number of recoverable hit points.

To compute the amount of permanent damage, roll percentile dice and multiply the result, as a percentage, times the amount of delayed damage incurred by the victim (round down). This gives the number of hit points that may not be recovered thereafter without the use of high-level magic. If the hit points or strength points of a victim drop below zero at any time during the "delayed damage process, he is dead.

The loss of strength points is independent of the amount of damage taken, even if more than one breath attack is used on the same figure. The lost strength points will be recovered at the same rate as lost hit points (one every 2 days), and magical cures will not help this (except for regeneration). When a healing/curing spell is used on a character who has also suffered damage of another sort, the other damage is recovered first, before applying any of the healing power to the breath damage.

Example: Kasanati the Unwise, sixth level fighter, and his party are involved in a melee with a scintillating dragon 39 feet long. During the fight, the dragon breathes on Kasa nati, doing 10d6 of damage. Kasanati successfully rolls his saving throw, cutting the damage in half, but still suffers 14 points of damage. Seven points are applied immediately. The party's cleric casts a *Cure Light Wounds* spell, expecting to heal about 4 points of damage, and is puzzled when only 2 points are cured. (The spell actually did heal 4 points of damage, but only half of the healing points are applied immediately.)

The next day, as they travel, Kasanati feels weak (he has lost 1 strength point) and, by day's end, he has lost another 3 hit points (4 minus 1 of the "healing points") and large blemished areas are appearing on his skin.

The next day, Kasanati loses another d3 of strength (2 points this time) and 2 more points of damage (3 minus the last "healing point").

Kasanati does not die, since his original hit-point total and strength score were high enough to withstand these losses. The DM now rolls percentile dice for permanent damage, getting a 68. This means that the unlucky fighter will be unable to recover 68% of the hit points he lost to the "delayed damage" effect of the dragon breath. The delayed loss was 7 hit points (simply half of the total damage, the effect of the *cure* spell does not enter into this calculation).

So, of the hit points Kasanati lost to delayed damage, four are lost forever (68% of 7 = 4.76, rounded down to 4) and the other three can be recovered. The maximum number of hit points Kasanati can have when at full strength is now four less than it was before he decided to engage the scintillating dragon (as if he had never rolled those four hit points in the first place). This reduction can only be offset by *Regeneration*, *Limited Wish* or *Alter Reality* spells.

Since the effect of its breath is so damaging and long-lasting the scintillating dragon is usually treated with great respect by all creatures that live within its area, and the dragon moves about with self-assurance. It expects most of those it meets to flee (either by being panicked by

the "scintillation" attack, or through real fear of what it can do), or be chewed up if they are unlucky enough to be entranced.

If several characters attempt to fight it together, the dragon will be offended - not afraid - and if attackers are clustered it will use its breath weapon (if possible) to "burn" all who stand in its way, hoping to garner one or two to satisfy its nearly constant hunger. If forced into melee, it will use its large mouth to bite (again, bringing its breath weapon into play if several opponents are within a potential area of effect), while beating its tail back and forth to cover its rear. Anyone hit by the tail must make a saving throw vs. breath weapon or be knocked to the ground and unable to attack in the next round.

If more than one scintillating dragon is encountered, it will be a family group consisting of a female and her brood. The hatchlings of this species remain with their mother for protection until they are capable of using their breath weapon and fending for themselves. The female will be at least 30' long and the juveniles all 15' or less. (Sometimes one of the young will remain with the mother for a year or so after acquiring use of the breath weapon at 14'.) The mother will be very defensive and will attack at the slightest provocation in an encounter.