

The Serpopard

([Paul Partington](#))

We made our way through a square archway to a wide gallery with sandstone walls and a floor of white marble. Before we could progress further, we had to deal with the creature lurking here. A huge cat-like animal, with light brown fur and black spots sat in the middle of the gallery. Its long serpent-like neck ended in the head of a great cat, with draconic ears and mouth and ferociously sharp teeth. "A serpopard!" exclaimed my companion. "Not seen one of these for a while!" Initially, it sat unmoving as if transfixed in place, but as we stepped through the archway it wasted no time in bounding to attack.

Coradian scholars named this creature because it has features of both a serpent and a leopard¹⁾. The serpopard is a rare creature native to desert regions, particularly the Kaikuruhan Desert. The superstitious view it as a cursed creature, abandoned by the gods to wander the desert; however, the god-kings were known to keep serpopards as pets or guards.



The serpopard can grow to four metres in length and about a metre in height, although the neck adds a further metre.

The serpopard is a nocturnal beast, preferring to hunt at night when it is cooler and when it can go undetected under the cover of darkness. Male serpopards tend to attack with their teeth, while females favour their claws. Their favoured prey are small rodents and lizards, although it is not unknown for serpopards to attack humans and humanoids. They will not be deliberately violent towards intelligent species but will attack if they are hungry or defending their territory.

Young serpopards can be trained to act as guard creatures by Kaikuhurun Barbarians of at least Rank 8 or those with the advanced Survival (desert) skill.

Serpopards are usually solitary creatures, although they can be found as a mating pair. After birth, the male leaves and the female teaches the cubs how to hunt and survive in the desert. Young serpopards leave the mother when they feel capable of surviving on their own. Mated pairs can communicate telepathically and, although they don't stay together, can find each other again during the next mating season.

Serpopards are fascinated with ancient ruins found in deserts, such as old tombs or temples, and will go out of their way to explore such places. It is not unheard of for adventurers to encounter a

serpopard inside such a building and find themselves under attack by a territorial serpopard...

Serpopards can travel great distances across deserts, using an innate form of *Teleport* at will (as per the Mystic spell, effectively jumping up to 100m at a time), although this only works outside and in sandy desert areas.

SERPOPARD			RE 4
ATTACK	18	Bite (d6, 4) or Claws ×2 (d8, 3)	
DEFENCE	10	Hide (AF 1)	
MAGICAL ATTACK	N/A	Magic Points	None
MAGICAL DEFENCE	7	Health Points	2d6_+12
EVASION	6	Movement	10m (20m)
STEALTH	15	PERCEPTION	7 (Panoptical)

Number encountered: usually 1 Treasure: none, unless guarding a Pharaoh's tomb...

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¹⁾

The name given to the creature by the ancient Kaikuhurans is lost to time.

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