

# More-Than-Human Intelligence cards

More-Than-Human cards | Sarah Brooks + Meghan McGrath | [Morethanhumancards.com](http://Morethanhumancards.com)

# Welcome to the More-Than-Human cards

The More-Than-Human intelligence cards are a vehicle to introduce more-than-human perspectives into conversations and design explorations. The discourse around human and machine intelligence is everywhere, moving fast, always changing. And, it artificially locks us into a binary where the only intelligences we consider, are the two. There's a wide world of creatures and entities that exist outside of the value systems and material realities of the human/machine dichotomy. This deck contains 68 of those entities.

These cards describe qualities, attributes and types of intelligence found in entities and creatures at all scales. From micro-organisms and simple organisms, to composite organisms and interconnected clone organisms, to plants, trees, insects, saltwater marine life, freshwater marine life, deep sea, amphibians, birds, mammals, marsupials, bodies of water, minerals, meteorological phenomena, extinct animals and space. We invite you to engage with these differences you can encounter in the cards, and use the cards to stretch conversations, problem-solving and imagining.

**Sarah Brooks + Meghan McGrath**  
**Fall 2025**

# Welcome to the More-Than-Human cards

Suggestions for how to use these cards:

1 - **Ask a question** during a meeting, conference, or conversation, inspired by these entities' ways of being, knowing, and doing.

2 - **Talk with** your fellow meeting participants, conference goers or conversation partners during downtimes or breaks based on the intelligences of one or more cards.

3 - **Consider** the entities intelligences, and how they could inform your own projects, including:

- Habitat
- Communication
- Sense of time
- Methods of perception
- Resource constraints
- Memory
- Things that matter to them
- Superpower



Tardigrade

## Tardigrade

Tardigrades, also known as water bears, are tiny, eight-legged micro-animals that look like something out of a sci-fi cartoon, but they're among the toughest creatures on earth. Living in a wide range of environments, from moss and lichen to soil, freshwater, hot springs, and icy glaciers, they have a simple central nervous system and sensory bristles that help them know their surroundings by detecting light, pressure, and chemical changes.

Their form of intelligence is survival-based: they can enter a near-death state called cryoprotective dehydration, drying out completely and curling into a tiny ball, surviving boiling, freezing, radiation, even the vacuum of space for years. They don't talk to or signal each other, mostly sticking to themselves. They produce a special protein that protects their DNA from damage, essentially serving as nature's built-in radiation shield, which helps them maintain their enduring existence.



## Aletsch Glacier

# Aletsch Glacier

The Aletsch Glacier, the largest in the Alps, possesses a slow, geological intelligence, perceiving change through the language of pressure, temperature, and gravity. This river of ice has carved valleys for millennia, its movements shaping the very landscape. Now, as it retreats due to a warming climate, its melting rate serves as a direct communication of planetary imbalance. The glacier is a living archive of atmospheric history, its layers holding trapped particles from centuries past, serving as both a breathtaking monument and a stark, irrefutable warning of the consequences of climate change.

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## American Elm Tree

# American Elm

The American elm, a vase-shaped tree, creates arching canopies reminiscent of green cathedrals. It perceives its environment through water, light, and fungal signals and nutrients exchanged through its roots. It exhibits slow, relational intelligence by tracking seasons, remembering past stresses, communicating with soil microbes, and adjusting to drought and insect attacks. Though nearly decimated by Dutch elm disease, some ancient elms have survived due to subtle genetic advantages or beneficial root microbiome partnerships, showcasing its resilience.

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## Card Fronts

Card backs print on reverse of same sheet.

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## Amethyst

# Amethyst

Amethyst is a form of quartz that has trapped iron and radiation within its lattice structure, transforming colorless silicon dioxide into violet. Found in volcanic cavities and ancient geodes, it grows in hexagonal crystals that record the precise conditions of its formation—temperature, pressure, and the slow seeping of mineral-rich water through stone. Its intelligence is architectural: each atom locks perfectly into place. Amethyst's genius is patient geometry: the ability to organize chaos into perfect, six-sided symmetry, and to preserve a frozen moment of the Earth's slow conversation with time. It is a mineral that thinks in angles and grows in silence, transforming waves of radiation through nothing but structure and endurance.

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## Amphibious Caterpillar

# Amphibious Caterpillar

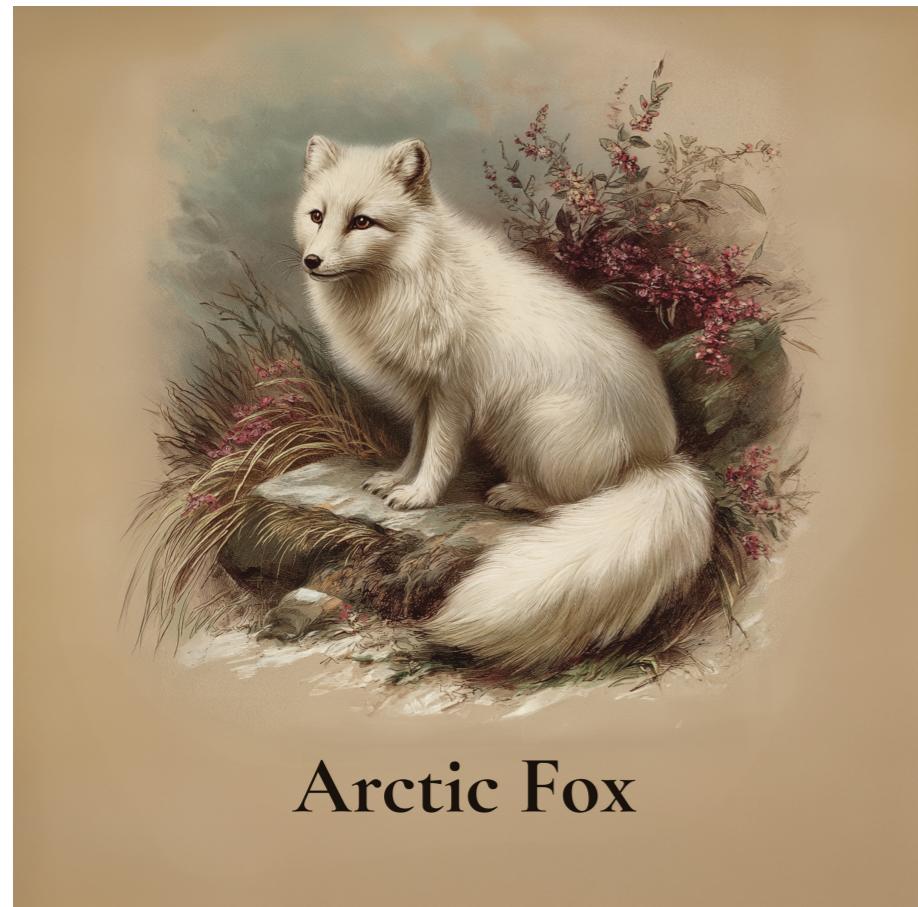
The amphibious caterpillar of Hawaii exhibits a unique environmental intelligence, being the only insect known to live equally well on land and underwater. Inhabiting volatile mountain streams, it perceives its world through pressure and flow, breathing through spiracles in the air and absorbing oxygen directly through its skin in fast-flowing currents. This adaptive intelligence is key to its survival; it spins a silk case decorated with local materials for camouflage and anchors itself with silk threads to avoid being swept away by flash floods, thriving in a niche that is lethal to others.

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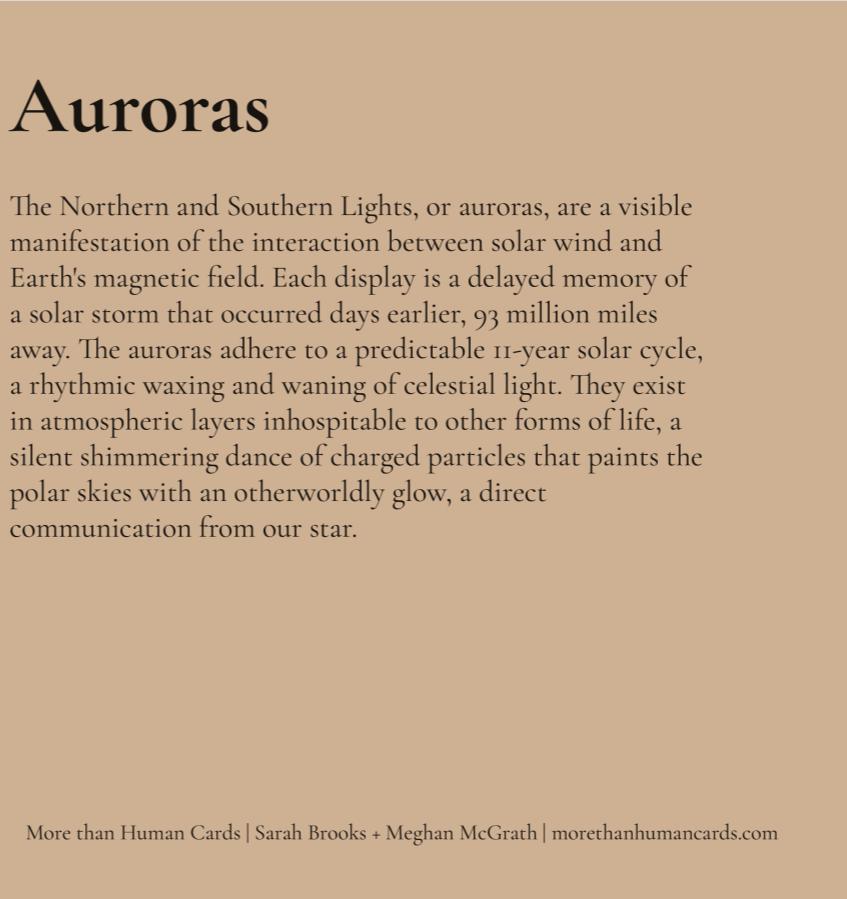
## Arctic Fox

The arctic fox is a master of survival intelligence, perfectly adapted to the extreme cold of the frozen north. Its thick, multi-layered fur provides such effective insulation that it only begins to shiver at  $-70^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and its coat changes color seasonally for camouflage. Its sensory intelligence is equally remarkable; it perceives its world through acute hearing that can pinpoint the location of lemmings moving deep beneath the snow. This allows it to hunt effectively even in the polar night, punching through the snow to catch its unseen prey, a testament to its perfect attunement to a harsh and unforgiving environment.

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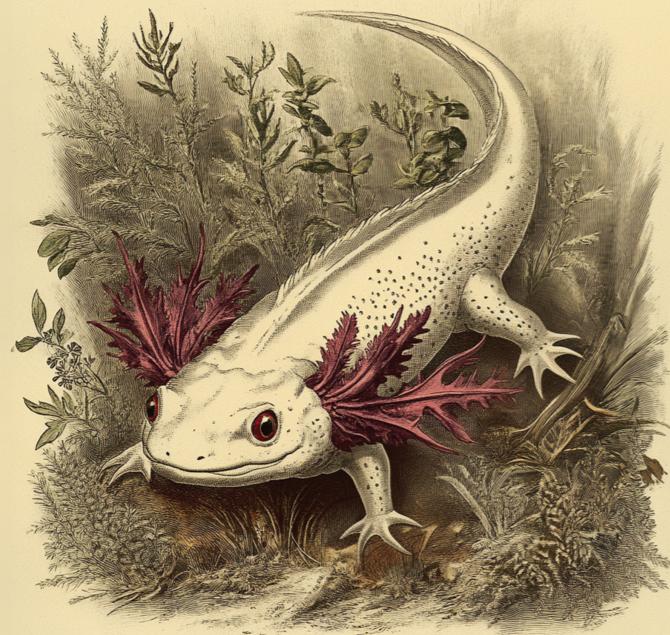
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## Auroras

The Northern and Southern Lights, or auroras, are a visible manifestation of the interaction between solar wind and Earth's magnetic field. Each display is a delayed memory of a solar storm that occurred days earlier, 93 million miles away. The auroras adhere to a predictable 11-year solar cycle, a rhythmic waxing and waning of celestial light. They exist in atmospheric layers inhospitable to other forms of life, a silent shimmering dance of charged particles that paints the polar skies with an otherworldly glow, a direct communication from our star.

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## Axolotl

# Axolotl

The axolotl, a neotenic salamander from the high-altitude lakes of Mexico, retains its aquatic, gilled form throughout its life, but its true genius lies in its ability to regrow entire limbs, spinal cords, and even parts of its heart and brain, dedifferentiating and then redifferentiating cells into whatever tissue is needed. This remarkable feat of biological mastery is a testament to a cellular wisdom that has been lost in most other vertebrates. The axolotl is a living library of regenerative possibility, a quiet, unassuming creature that holds the key to a medical revolution.

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## Bandicoot

# Bandicoot

The bandicoot is a nocturnal ecosystem engineer, its intelligence expressed through its persistent, solitary foraging. It perceives its world through an acute sense of smell and hearing, detecting insects, worms, and the underground fruiting bodies of fungi. Its constant digging, creating conical pits in the soil, is not random but a targeted search for food. By turning over soil, the bandicoot improves water penetration, aerates the ground, and aids in nutrient cycling, making it a small but powerful gardener of the Australian bush.

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## Bioluminescent Algae

## Bioluminescent Algae

Bioluminescent algae are tiny marine organisms that live in coastal waters, bays, lagoons, and warm, shallow seas. They perceive their world through pressure, tides, and the rhythms of light and dark. Their chemistry serves as both signal and shield. At night, rudimentary photoreceptors prime their bioluminescence, and when disturbed, they ignite in a flash of blue-green light. This startling glow is a sophisticated defense strategy. A flash of light can surprise a predator or illuminate it for larger hunters.

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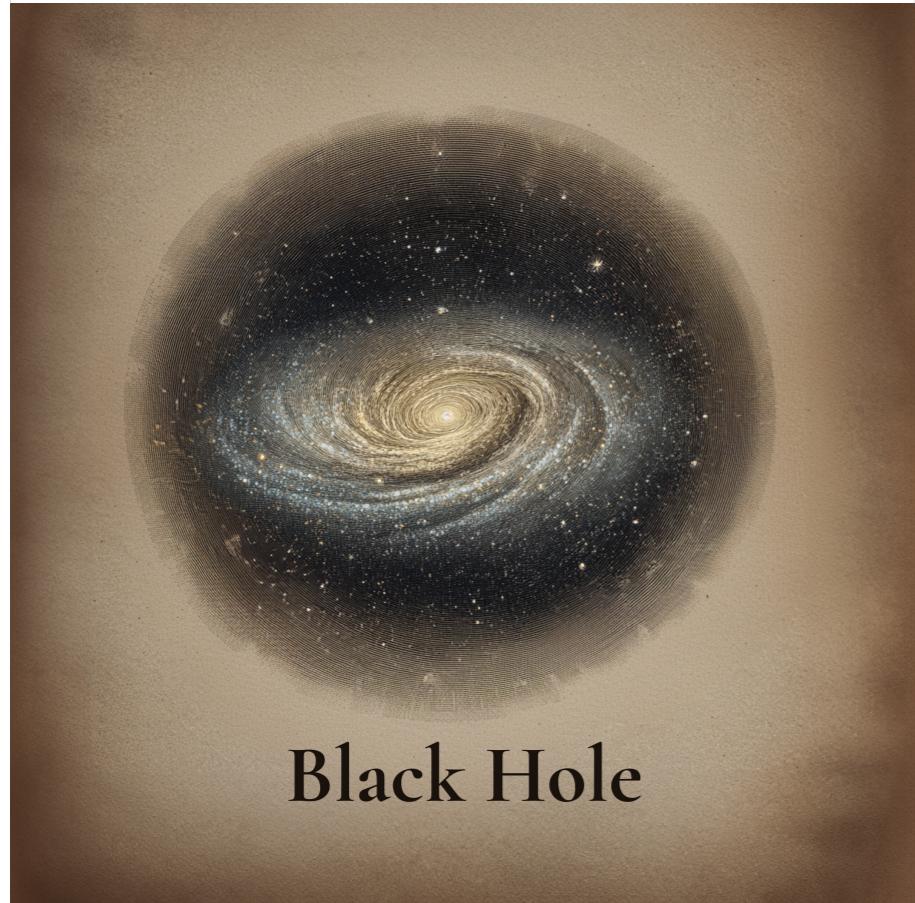


## Birch Tree

## Birch Tree

Birch trees are pioneers, their intelligence rooted in speed and relationality. They are among the first to colonize barren ground, their pale bark a symbol of renewal. A birch's greatest resource is its alliances; it thrives through partnerships with fungi, bacteria, and birds. It perceives threats through chemical signals, releasing airborne compounds when browsed by deer that trigger defenses in nearby birches. This makes a stand of birch trees a living, responsive network, a fast-growing, short-lived community that paves the way for the slower, more deliberate intelligence of the ancient forest.

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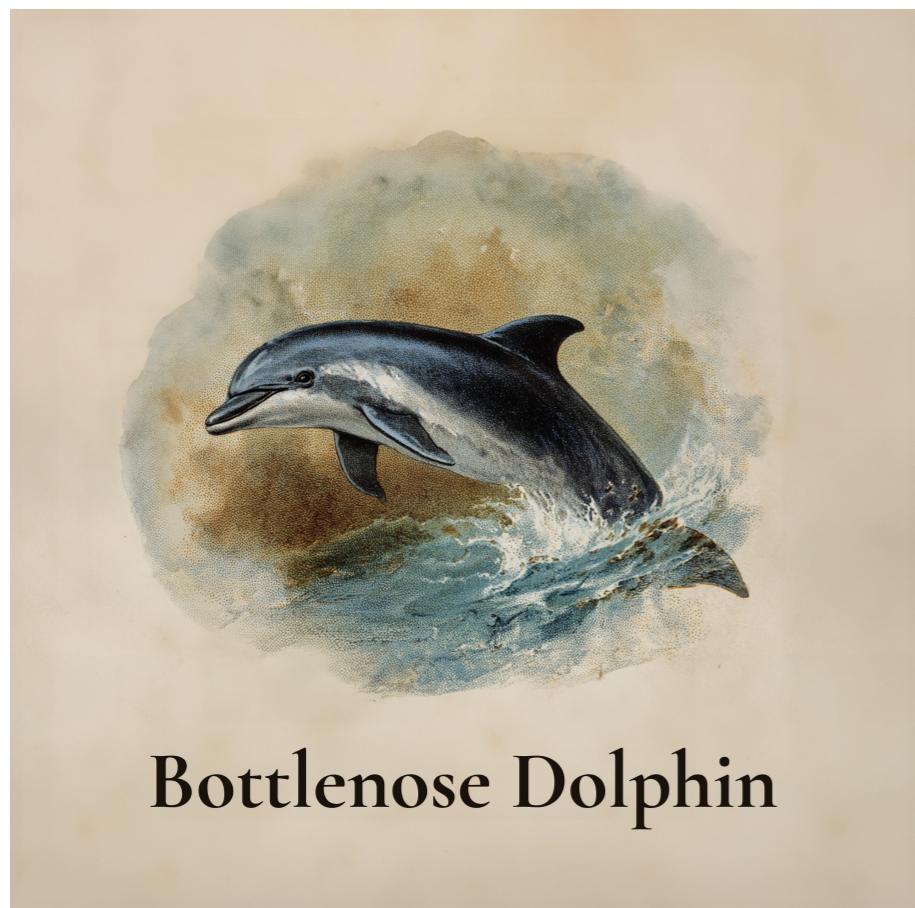


## Black Hole

# Black Hole

A black hole is a region of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape. Its intelligence is one of pure physics, a singularity that bends the fabric of the universe. It perceives the world through the mass and motion of surrounding matter, pulling in gas, dust, and stars. At its event horizon, time slows and space curves, creating one of the most extreme and enigmatic landscapes in the cosmos. A black hole is a cosmic enigma, a place where our understanding of physics breaks down, a silent, powerful force that shapes the evolution of galaxies.

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## Bottlenose Dolphin

# Bottlenose Dolphin

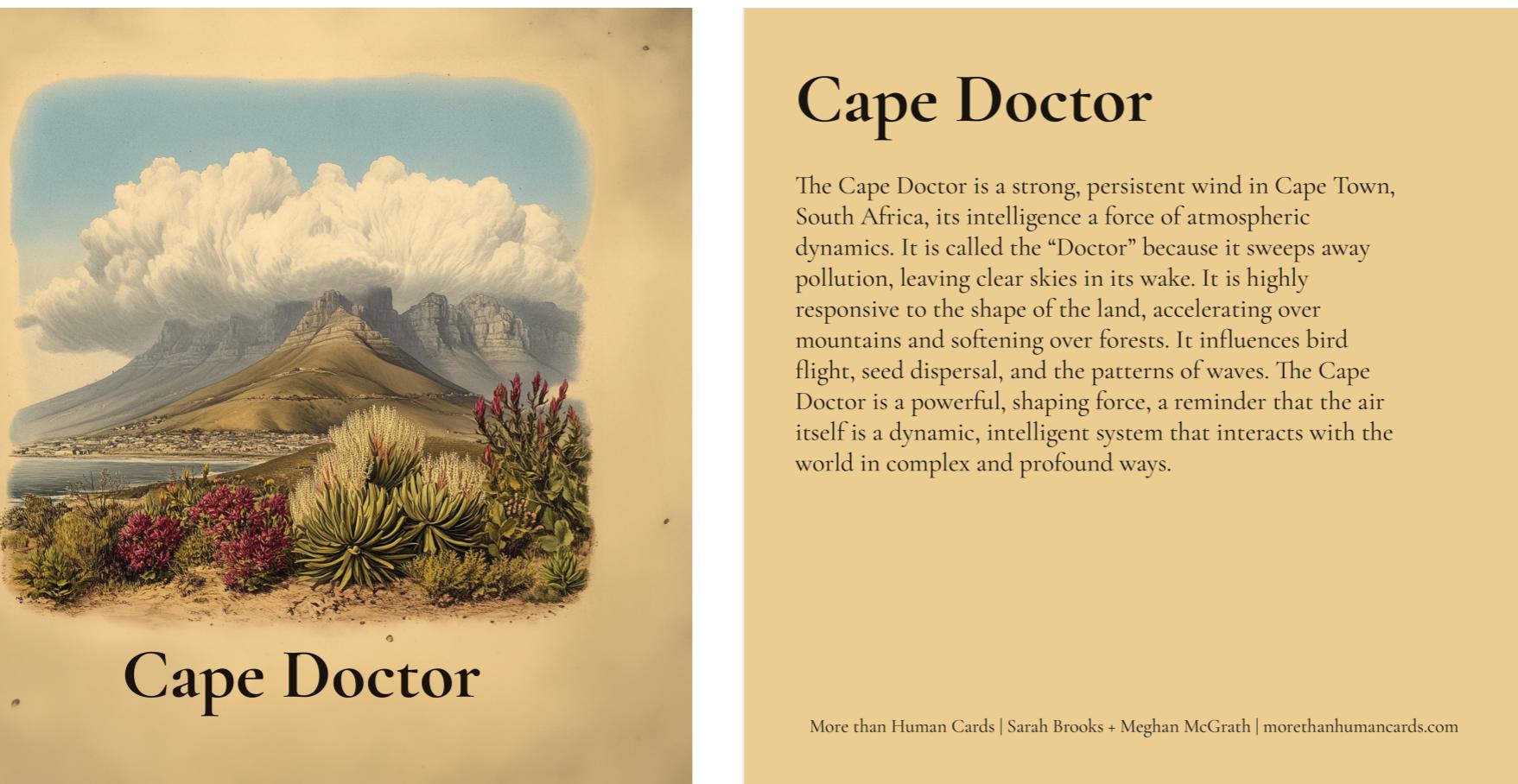
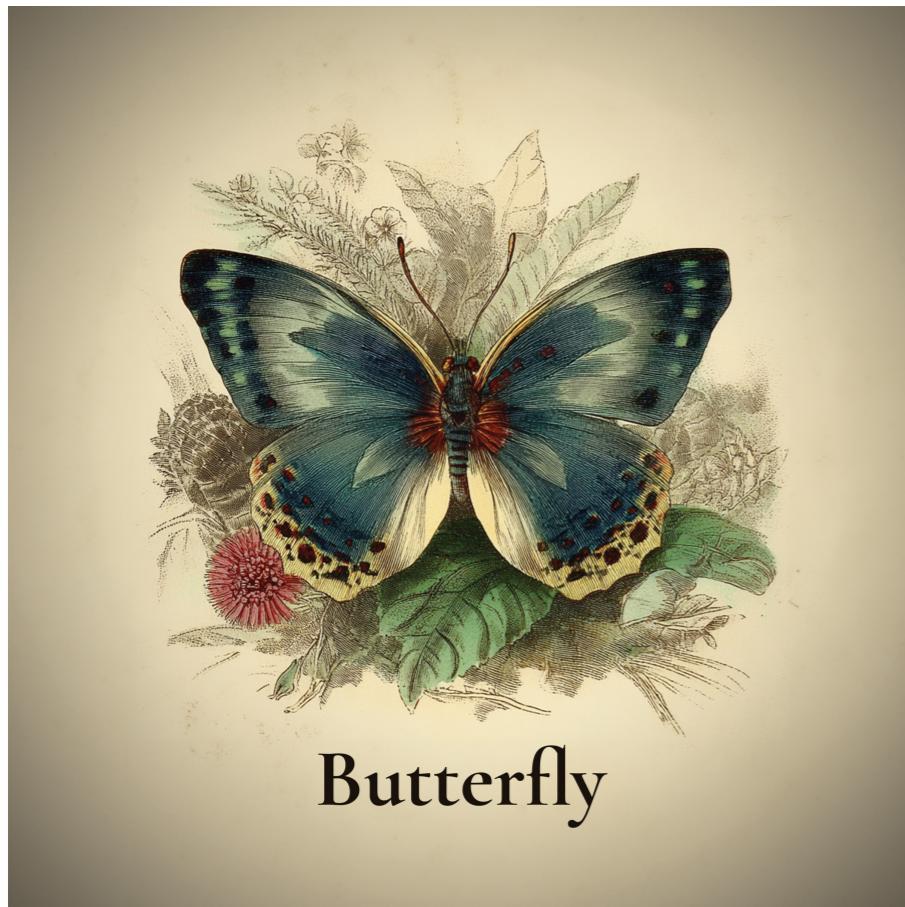
The Bottlenose Dolphin lives in a world of sound, navigating through sonic detection and painting the underwater world in three-dimensional echoes. They perceive through echolocation so precise, they can detect a fish's swim bladder through murky water or distinguish between different metals. Their intelligence is also social and linguistic—dolphins name themselves and each other with signature whistles, maintain lifelong friendships, and teach their young complex hunting techniques that vary by region. Dolphins play for the sake of playing, riding waves and chasing boats with what appears to be pure joy. They constantly negotiate social bonds in a world where survival depends on the pod. This is a creature that thinks in sound, feels through water pressure, and lives in a continuous acoustic conversation with the ocean itself.

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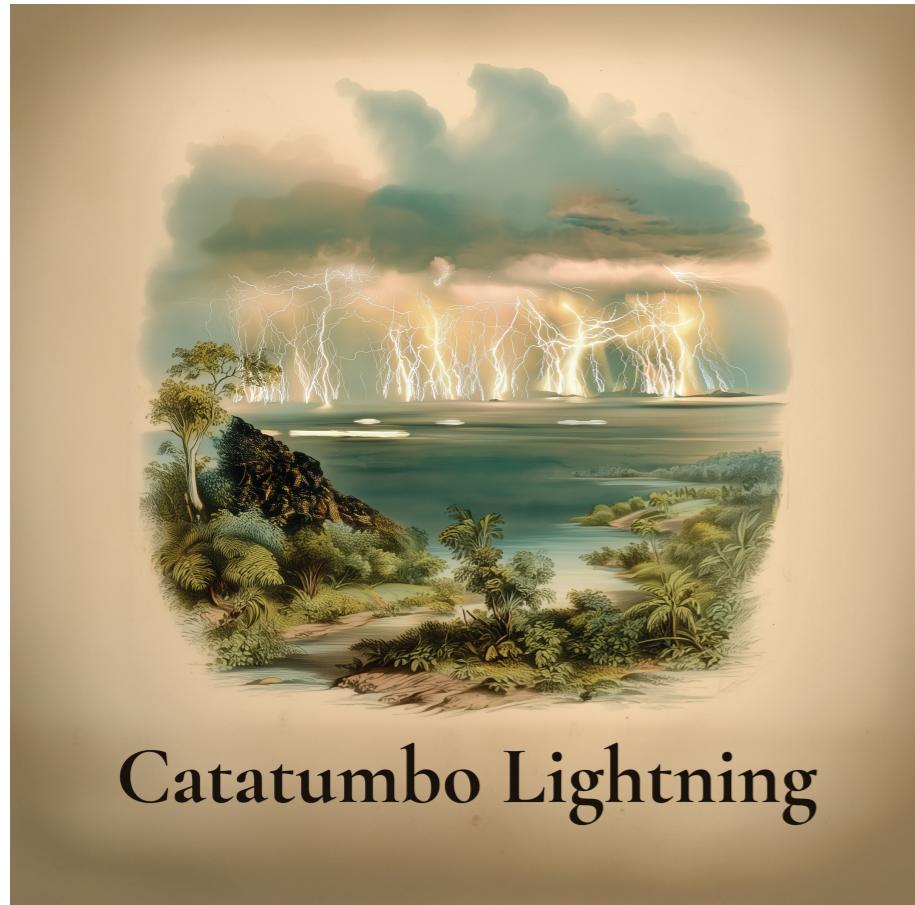
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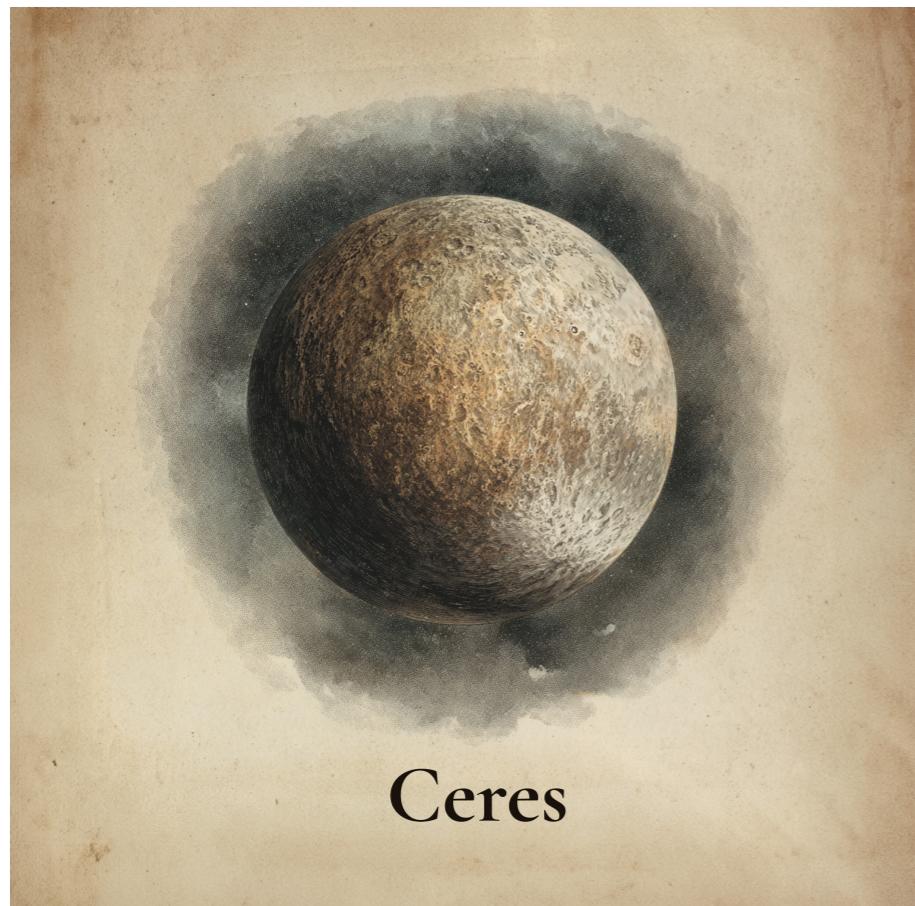


## Catatumbo Lightning

# Catatumbo Lightning

Catatumbo lightning is a rare and powerful atmospheric phenomenon in Venezuela, a near-continuous lightning storm that acts as a natural lighthouse for ships in the Caribbean. Its intelligence is one of electrical charge and discharge, a natural battery that recharges the atmosphere nightly. The unique combination of wind patterns, topography, and methane from the surrounding swamps creates the perfect conditions for this spectacular display. Catatumbo lightning is a testament to the complex, interconnected systems that govern our planet, a beautiful and awe-inspiring display of the Earth's electrical intelligence.

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## Ceres

# Ceres

Ceres is a geologically active dwarf planet, its intelligence a slow, cosmic dance of ice and rock. Orbiting between Mars and Jupiter, it features cryovolcanoes that erupt with briny mud. With a slight axial tilt, it experiences minimal seasonal variation, but its poles contain regions of perpetual shadow where water ice is stable. Ceres is not alive, but it is a dynamic world, its surface a record of its internal processes and its interactions with the solar system. It is a reminder that even in the cold, dark reaches of space, there is a form of planetary intelligence at work.

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## Chinchilla

# Chinchilla

The chinchilla, native to the high Andes, exhibits a specialized form of embodied intelligence adapted to its cold, arid habitat. Its survival is tied to its fur—the densest of any land mammal—which provides insulation but cannot get wet. Lacking water, its intelligence is expressed through its instinctual use of fine volcanic ash for dust baths, a precise behavior that removes oils and cleanses its coat. This social creature perceives its world through keen hearing and large eyes adapted for twilight, its agile body perfectly suited for navigating the rocky crevices of its mountain home with quiet, cautious precision.



## Coast Redwood

# Coast Redwood

Coast redwoods, the tallest trees on Earth, exhibit a collective, forest-wide intelligence. Their minds are not in their individual trunks but in the network of fused roots, fungi, and shared water that connects them. They circulate nutrients and moisture, sustaining injured or shaded trees for decades. Through chemical signals, they alert one another to drought and pests, triggering a coordinated defense. Their canopy combs moisture from coastal fog, nourishing the entire ecosystem below. A redwood grove is not a collection of individuals but a single, interconnected organism, a patient, enduring intelligence that shapes its own world over centuries.

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## Cookiecutter Shark

# Cookiecutter Shark

The cookiecutter shark is a small, elusive predator of the deep ocean, spending its days in darkness, ascending to the surface at night. It perceives the world through large, sensitive eyes and a bioluminescent belly that provides counter-illumination, making it invisible to prey below. Its unique jaw structure allows it to take neat, circular bites from much larger animals, undersea cables, and even submarines. This cigar-shaped shark inhabits the vast, sparsely populated waters of the open ocean, where survival demands patience and the ability to endure long periods without food.

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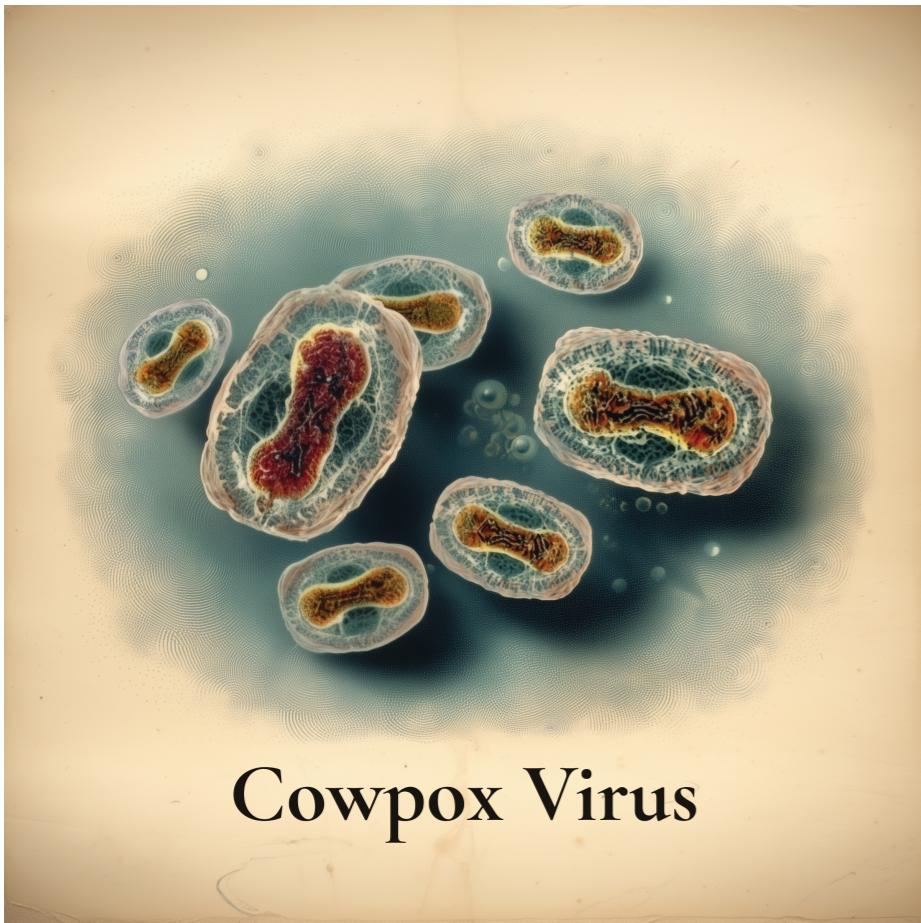


## Coral Reefs

# Coral Reefs

The coral reef is one of the most biodiverse environments on earth; a bustling, living structure built over centuries by countless generations of tiny polyps, or coral architects. It thrives in sunlit shallows, fueled by a symbiotic relationship with algae that live within the coral's tissues. The reef behaves like one single mind, perceiving its world through chemical signals, temperature changes, and the flow of water, coordinating spawning events with the cycles of the moon. A delicate balance between coral, algae, fish, and invertebrates sustains the reef, a vibrant, interconnected city of the sea.

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## Cowpox Virus

# Cowpox Virus

The cowpox virus demonstrates a remarkable evolutionary intelligence, surviving and thriving despite lacking a brain or consciousness. It cleverly dodges the immune defenses of its hosts, rodents, and sometimes humans through millions of years of genetic adaptation. Its large, complex genome contains a vast arsenal of genes specifically for manipulating and evading the host's immune system. This very ability to interact with a host's biology without destroying it made cowpox a game-changer in medicine, serving as the first vaccine, by providing cross-immunity to the deadly smallpox virus.

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## Crayfish

# Crayfish

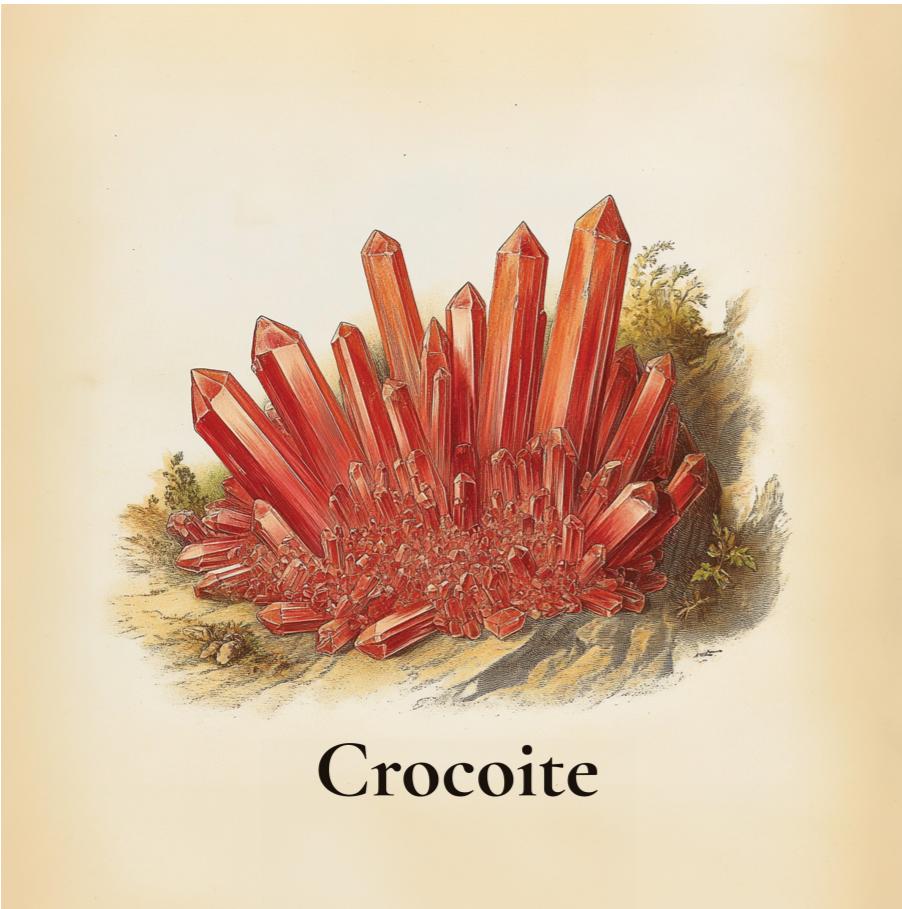
The crayfish displays a complex sensory intelligence, navigating its freshwater world through a forest of antennae that taste, touch, and map its surroundings. Its hydrodynamic intelligence allows it to perceive subtle water movements and pressure changes, while chemoreceptors detect dissolved chemicals, guiding it to food and away from predators. This small, armored crustacean can even sense weak electrical fields generated by other organisms. By processing multi-layered sensory information in this way, the crayfish builds a rich, dynamic understanding of its environment, making it a highly successful forager and survivor in river and lake ecosystems.

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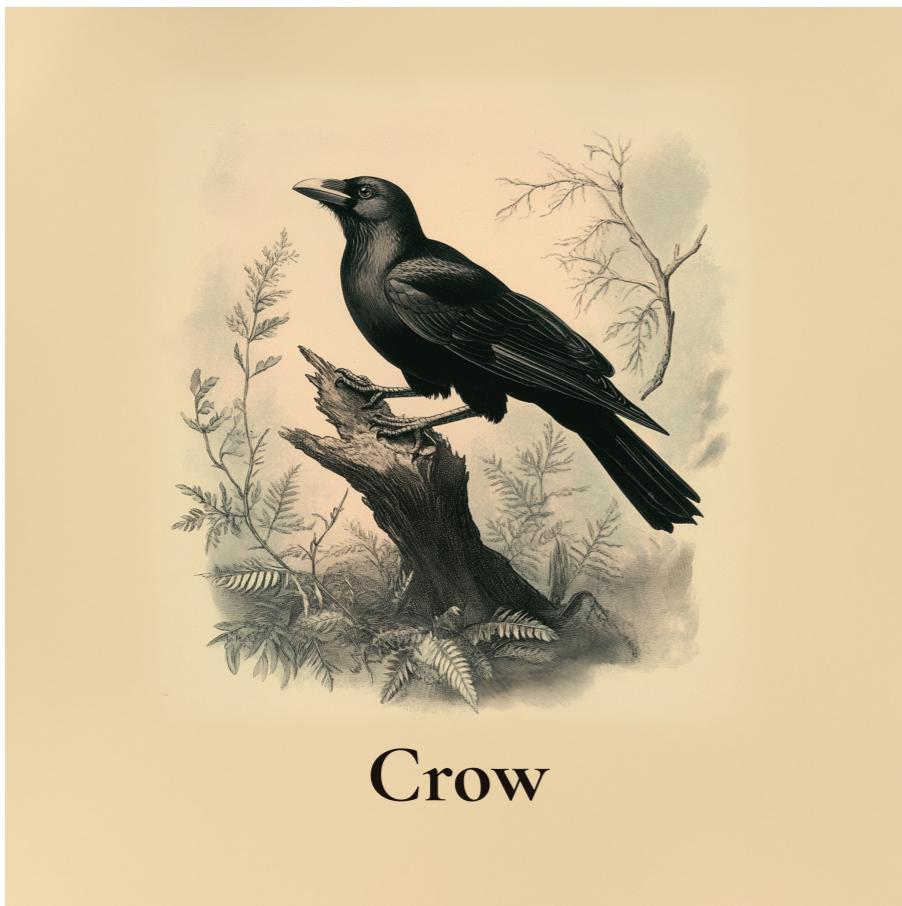


## Crocoite

# Crocoite

Crocoite is a mineral, a crystalline formation of lead chromate, its intelligence the slow, patient language of geology. It forms in the oxidation zones of lead deposits with brilliant orange-red crystals serving as a testament to the precise chemical conditions required for its creation. It does not perceive the world in a biological sense, but its existence is a direct response to its environment, a physical manifestation of the laws of chemistry and physics. Crocoite is a fiery, beautiful reminder that intelligence can be found not just in living things, but in the very structure of the earth itself.

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## Crow

# Crow

Crows exhibit a strikingly advanced cognitive intelligence, with brains proportionally as large as a chimpanzee's. They perceive the world through sight, social learning, and cause-and-effect reasoning. They use tools, recognize human faces, and pass knowledge through generations. Crows can solve complex puzzles, plan for the future, and even hold "funerals" where they gather to learn about dangers, or grieve. Their communication is complex, a language of caws, clicks, rattles, and mimicry. They are skybound problem-solving smarties with a culture of their own.

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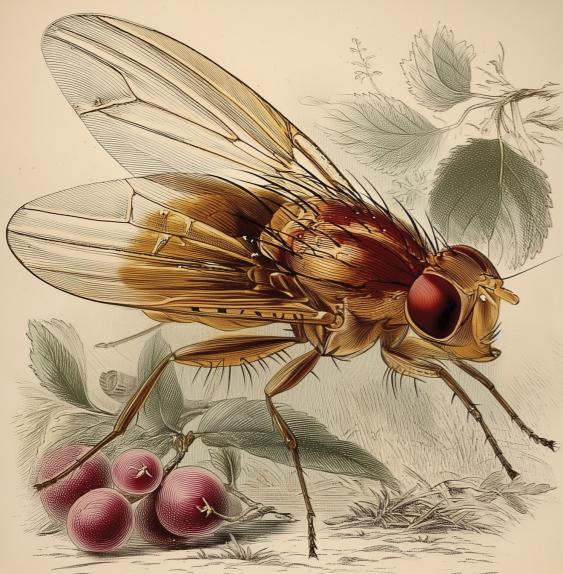
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## Dunnock



## Fruit Fly

# Dunnock

The dunnock, or hedge sparrow, is a small, quiet bird of hedgerows and woodland borders. While its appearance is modest, its mating systems are surprisingly fluid, ranging from monogamy (one partner) to polyandry (one female, multiple males) and polygynandry (multiple males and females mating within a group). This behavioral flexibility allows it to adapt its reproductive strategy to the specific conditions of its environment. Foraging close to the ground, it seeks insects, spiders, and seeds with its delicate beak and subtle movements that blend into the undergrowth. Dense vegetation sustains the dunnock's world, providing both food and concealment from predators.

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# Fruit Fly

Fruit flies, often uninvited guests, are tiny geniuses of biology, fast learners with a brain of only 10,000 neurons. They perceive their world through a powerful blend of chemical cues, visual signals, and time perception, allowing them to remember food sources, and navigate the world deftly. A high "flicker fusion rate" allows them to perceive the world of humans and animals in essentially slow motion, giving them ample time to react and escape when needed. They are capable of spatial learning and surprisingly good decision makers. As speedy reproducers, fruit flies adapt and evolve in real-time, making them the unsung pioneers of genetic research.

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## Ghost Orchid



## Giant Barrel Sponge

# Ghost Orchid

The Ghost Orchid is found in the humid swamps of Florida and Cuba. A leafless, chlorophyll-free flower, it clings to the bark of cypress and pond apple trees, photosynthesizing through its roots alone. It can only be pollinated by a single species of sphinx moth and blooms unpredictably, sometimes waiting years between flowerings, as if listening for conditions only it can sense. The orchid perceives through its root tips, detecting humidity, fungal partners, and the precise chemistry of its host tree's bark. It survives not by independence but through radical dependence, forming symbiotic relationships with mycorrhizal fungi that feed it sugars drawn from the tree.

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# Giant Barrel Sponge

The giant barrel sponge, the redwood of the reef, is one of the ocean's oldest and largest animals. Lacking a brain, it perceives its world through the flow of water and chemical signals it carries, adjusting its pumping and even "sneezing" to expel waste. Its embodied intelligence allows it to regulate its internal microbiome and repair damage. Some individuals are estimated to be over 2,000 years old, making them living time capsules of reef history. Anchored and silent, the giant barrel sponge is a study of stillness, reading the ocean through presence and patience.

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## Gingko

# Gingko

The ginkgo is a tree of deep time, its form honed in ancient forests long vanished but still perfectly suited to the varied habitats it occupies today. Its intelligence lies in an adaptive patience: a slow metabolism that conserves energy, seasonal rhythms that sync precisely with shifting climates, and a remarkable tolerance for drought, pollution, and nutrient-poor soils. Its fan-shaped leaves capture light with elegant efficiency, and its sturdy architecture allows it to thrive in both dense urban landscapes and quiet temple groves. Living for millennia, each ginkgo acts as a long-memory witness to its surroundings, interpreting and enduring environmental change with a resilience rooted in 200 million years of evolutionary practice.

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## Giraffe

# Giraffe

The giraffe's towering form is a masterpiece of physiological intelligence, an evolutionary solution to the challenge of its own anatomy. To pump blood to a brain so far from its heart, it maintains blood pressure nearly twice that of other large mammals, managed by a super-charged heart and a network of specialized valves. Its spatial intelligence allows it to read its environment from a rare vertical perspective, browsing on foliage untouched by other herbivores. Even its legs, wrapped in exceptionally tight, thick skin that functions like natural compression stockings to prevent blood from pooling, are part of a system engineered to thrive in open savanna landscapes that demand both height and stability.

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## Horseshoe Crab

# Horseshoe Crab

The horseshoe crab is a living fossil, its design nearly unchanged for 445 million years. Its ancient, sensory intelligence perceives the world through ten eyes, including compound eyes that become a million times more sensitive at night and median ocelli that detect UV light, guiding its moon-driven spawning rituals. This ancient chelicerate, more closely related to spiders than crabs, possesses a unique biological sensing ability in its copper-based blue blood, which contains amebocytes that provide an exquisitely sensitive defense against bacterial toxins, a property now vital to modern medicine for testing vaccines and medical devices.

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## Hummingbird

# Hummingbird

The hummingbird is a blur of feathers and fierce intention, its intelligence as fast and fluid as its flight. Despite its tiny size, its brain is proportionally the largest of any bird's, enabling it to perceive the world with razor-sharp color vision, and an astonishing memory for flower locations and nectar refill times. It can even detect ultraviolet patterns on petals invisible to humans. Its high-speed navigation and split-second decisions are a testament to a mind built for acrobatic flight. With a rapid heartbeat and the ability to enter a state of temporary hibernation at night, the hummingbird is a tiny jet engine of the natural world.

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## Icelandic Horse

# Icelandic Horse

The Icelandic horse possesses a unique kinesthetic intelligence, expressed through its five natural gaits, including the famed *tölt*. This four-beat gait, where one foot is always on the ground, provides a remarkably smooth, floating ride, a genetic trait passed down through a thousand years of isolated breeding. Its sure-footedness and strength, honed on Iceland's rugged volcanic terrain, represents a deep, embodied intelligence adapted for endurance and stability. The horse perceives its world through a keen spatial awareness, navigating harsh landscapes with a grace and power that made it essential to Viking-age survival and a symbol of national identity.

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## Immortal Jellyfish

# Immortal Jellyfish

The Immortal Jellyfish defies death, reverting to its earliest stage of life, a polyp, when threatened or injured, and beginning its life cycle anew. Lacking a centralized brain, it perceives its environment through a diffuse nerve net, using eye spots to detect light, touch, and chemical changes in the water. This biologically resilient intelligence thrives in warm, coastal waters where plankton are abundant. Its intelligence is cellular, allowing it to navigate the challenges of its environment not by thinking, but by becoming. It is a creature of perpetual renewal, its existence a continuous, adaptive response to change.

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## Jaguar

# Jaguar

Jaguars inhabit rainforest corridors, preferring areas with permanent water sources and dense forest cover suitable for ambush hunting. Their spatial memories form precise maps of their rainforest territories. They possess an intimate knowledge of water sources, hunting spots, scent-marking locations, and escape routes. They gather this information through data-rich scent markings and ground vibrations sensed through their paws. As cathemeral animals, their activity is not determined by sunlight but by prey availability and the presence of threats. The jaguar is a solitary, elusive predator.

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## Kelimutu Volcano

# Kelimutu Volcano

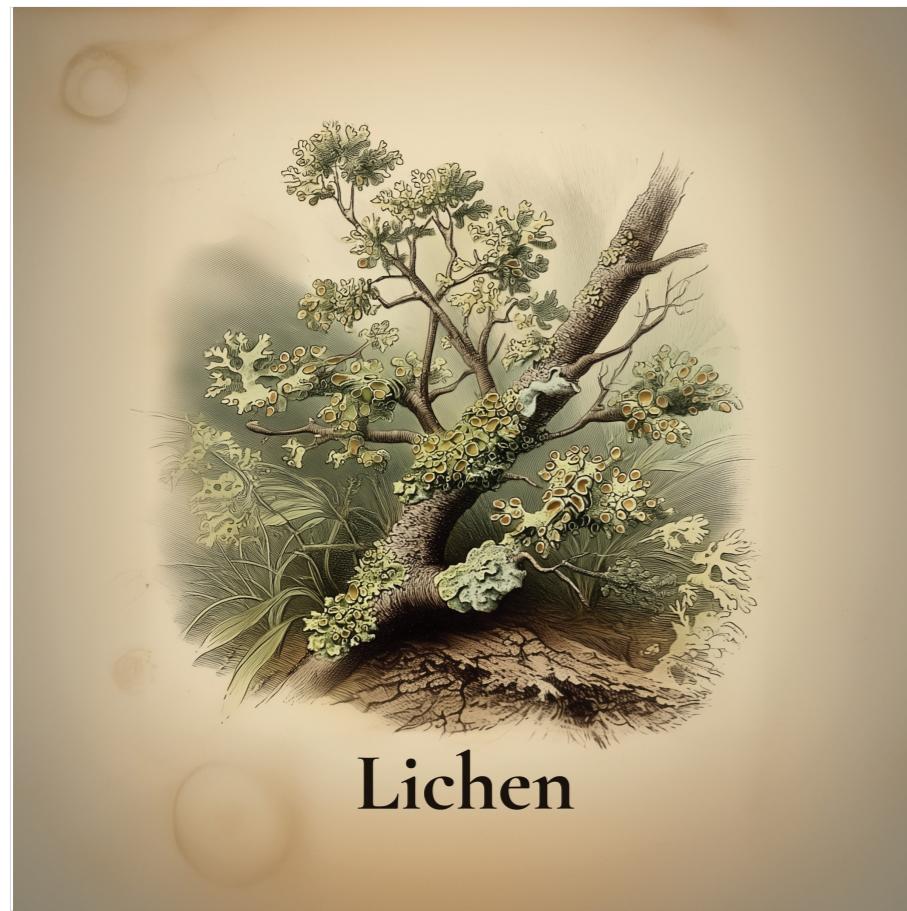
Kelimutu volcano exhibits a dynamic geochemical intelligence, expressed through its three crater lakes, each a different, ever-changing color. It perceives its own internal state through pressure and temperature, and communicates it through the shifting chemistry of its lakes, which change from turquoise to black, green, or red as volcanic gases and minerals are released. Local legend interprets this as the resting place of souls, but it is the Earth's own living chemistry on display. Kelimutu is a place where geology speaks in color, its mysterious, vibrant rhythms a source of both scientific fascination and cultural reverence.

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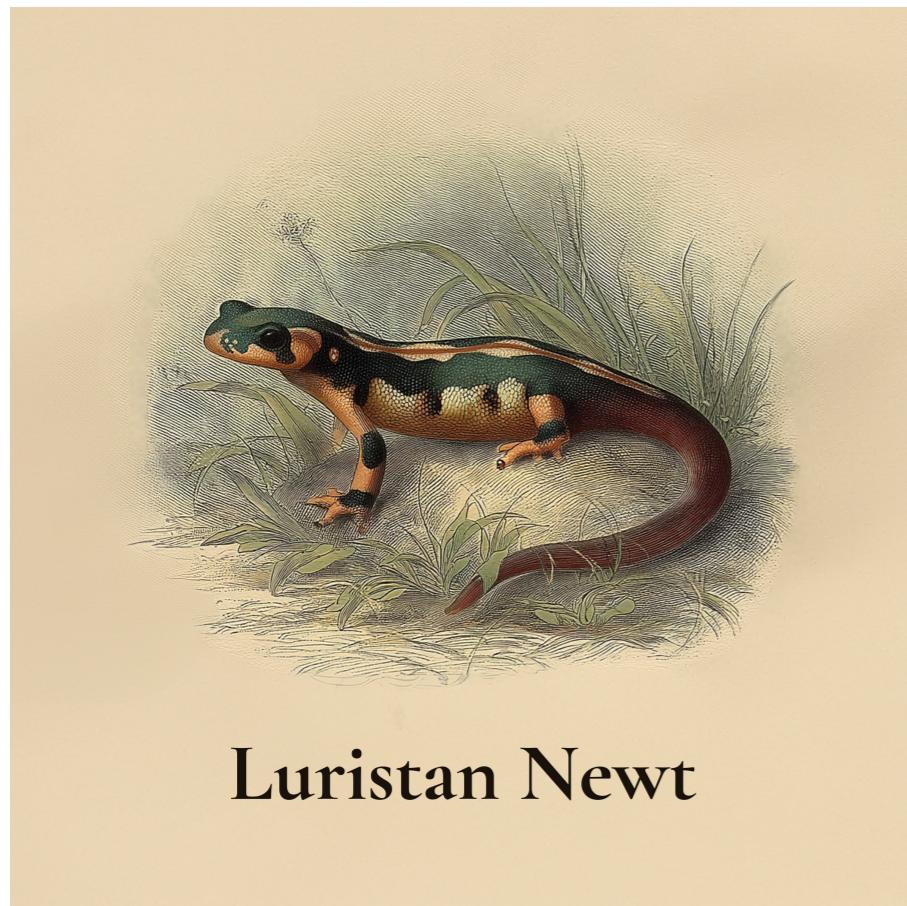


## Lichen

# Lichen

Lichen is a composite organism, a symbiotic partnership between a fungus and an alga or cyanobacterium. Its intelligence is one of cooperation and resilience. The fungus provides structure and protection, while the alga produces food through photosynthesis. This partnership allows lichen to thrive in some of the harshest environments on Earth, from arctic tundra to desert rocks. Lichen perceives its world through humidity, becoming dormant in times of drought and reactivating when moisture returns. It is a testament to the power of collaboration, a living example of how two different organisms can come together to create something stronger and more resilient than either could be alone.

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## Luristan Newt

# Luristan Newt

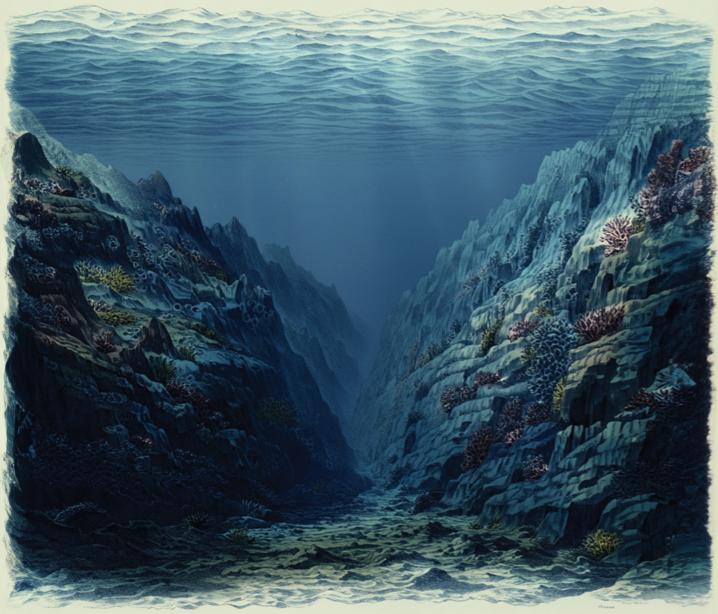
The Luristan newt, a fiery gem of Iran's Zagros Mountains, embodies a refined survival intelligence shaped by the cold, clear streams that thread through its high-altitude range. It reads its environment through intricate chemical cues in the water, navigating a world defined by shifting currents, seasonal snowmelt, and densely vegetated banks. Its vivid orange-and-black pattern broadcasts its toxicity, an evolutionary strategy honed for the predators of this rugged landscape. As a specialized inhabitant of these mountain waterways, the newt mirrors the rhythms and purity of its environment, functioning as a living signal of the intricate ecological harmony that defines the Zagros ecosystem.

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## Mariana Trench

# Mariana Trench

The Mariana Trench, the deepest place on Earth, is shaped by chemosynthesis and plate tectonics, rather than sunlight. In perpetual darkness, it relies on “marine snow”—a constant rain of organic matter and waste from the world above—and functions as a natural recycling system. The creatures inhabiting this abyss have evolved in isolation for millions of years, their bodies adapted to a darkness that has never known dawn. Their intelligence is one of survival in an environment of crushing pressure and absolute cold, a testament to life’s tenacity in the most inhospitable corners of the planet.

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## Mycorrhizal Fungi

# Mycorrhizal Fungi

Mycorrhizal fungi are vast hidden networks that weave through soil, fusing with plant roots in a symbiotic exchange. Mycorrhizal threads connect trees, shrubs, and grasses into living communities, allowing them to share nutrients, relay distress signals, and coordinate growth. These underground alliances influence forest resilience, crop health, and the global carbon cycle. When drought or cold arrives, mycorrhizal fungi can slow their metabolism, sealing themselves into the soil until roots awaken them with a pulse of sugar.

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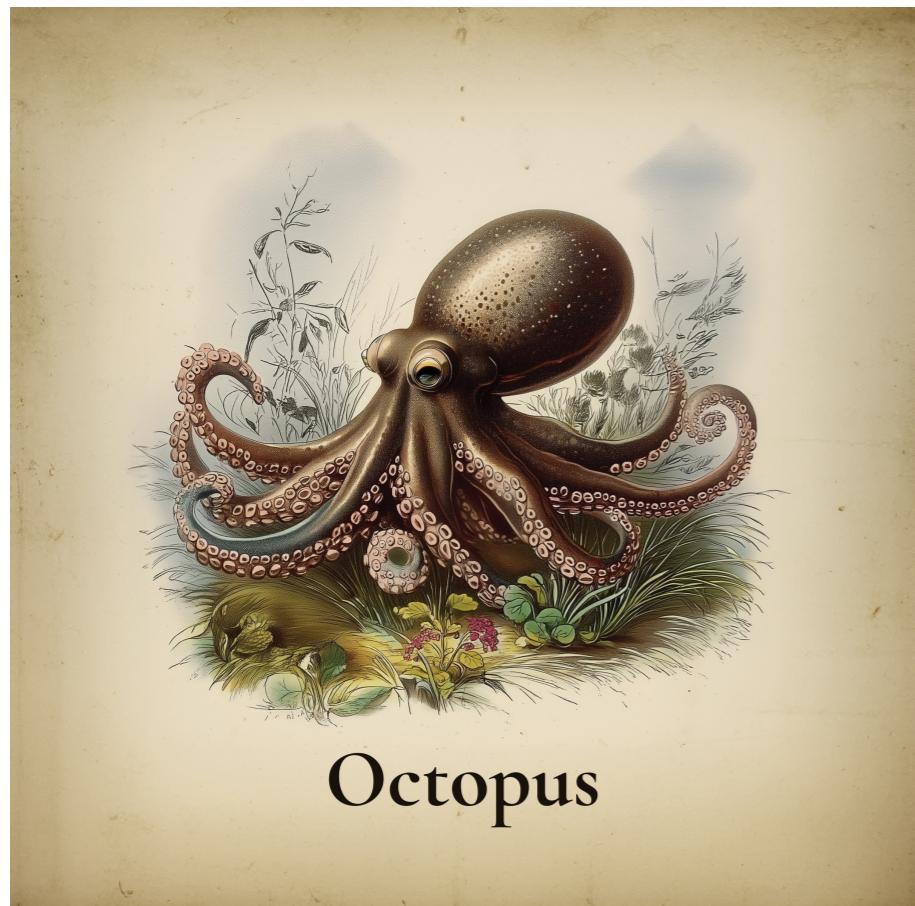


## Native Bees

# Native Bees

Native bees, like the rusty patched bumblebee and the blue orchard mason bee, are master navigators, architects, and communicators shaped by the specific landscapes they inhabit. Their social and sensory intelligence includes the ability to read polarized light—patterns in the sky invisible to humans—to orient themselves as they memorize the geometry of meadows, orchards, and forest edges. They track nectar-rich plants by scent, map bloom cycles across their foraging territories, and share information through vibrations, subtle scent cues, and even electric-field signals that reveal whether a flower has been recently visited. Through these layered abilities, native bees interpret their habitats with extraordinary precision, synchronizing their lives to the rhythms of the ecosystems they sustain.

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## Octopus

# Octopus

The octopus, found in oceans worldwide, is a shapeshifting, color-changing creature with a mind as alien as the deep sea. Its distributed intelligence places two-thirds of its neurons in its arms, which can taste, touch, and make decisions independently. It perceives the world through texture, color, and water pressure, learning by observation, and solving complex puzzles. With a sharp memory and the ability to recognize individual humans, the octopus is an expert in camouflage, instantly mimicking its surroundings. Its eerie precision challenges our understanding of consciousness.

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## Otter

# Otter

The otter is an expert of aquatic life, showcasing a playful and embodied intelligence. It perceives its world through highly sensitive whiskers that create a 3D map of underwater vibrations, allowing it to hunt in murky water. This tactile intelligence is complemented by its famous use of tools, as sea otters use specific rocks to crack open shellfish. As a keystone species, their appetite for sea urchins protects entire kelp forests, driving an ecological strategy that shapes their coastal environment. With eyes adapted for land or water and nostrils that seal shut, the otter moves with boundless curiosity between two worlds.

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## Owl

# Owl

Owls inhabit diverse environments from forests to urban edges, and nest in hidden places to facilitate their hunting. Their intelligence is rooted in acute sensory perception, their minds attuned to the silence and shadow of the night. Their exceptional night vision and directional hearing, enhanced by facial discs that funnel sound, allow them to hunt in complete darkness. They are solitary and observational, demonstrating patience and precision. They possess a strong memory for their territory and the movements of their prey.

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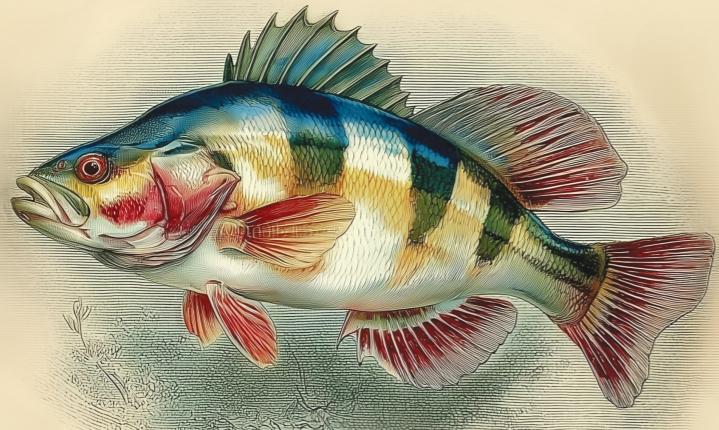
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## Pando



## Perch

## Pando

Pando is a vast quaking aspen clone in Utah, a single organism connected by a massive root system. With 47,000 stems covering over 100 acres, its intelligence is distributed and ancient. Pando perceives its world as a single, interconnected being, with its roots—some over 80,000 years old—experiencing time on a millennial scale. This clonal colony has a deep memory of place, having survived ice ages and countless environmental shifts. Pando is not just a forest; it is a single, resilient consciousness, a living testament to the enduring power of life on a geological timescale.

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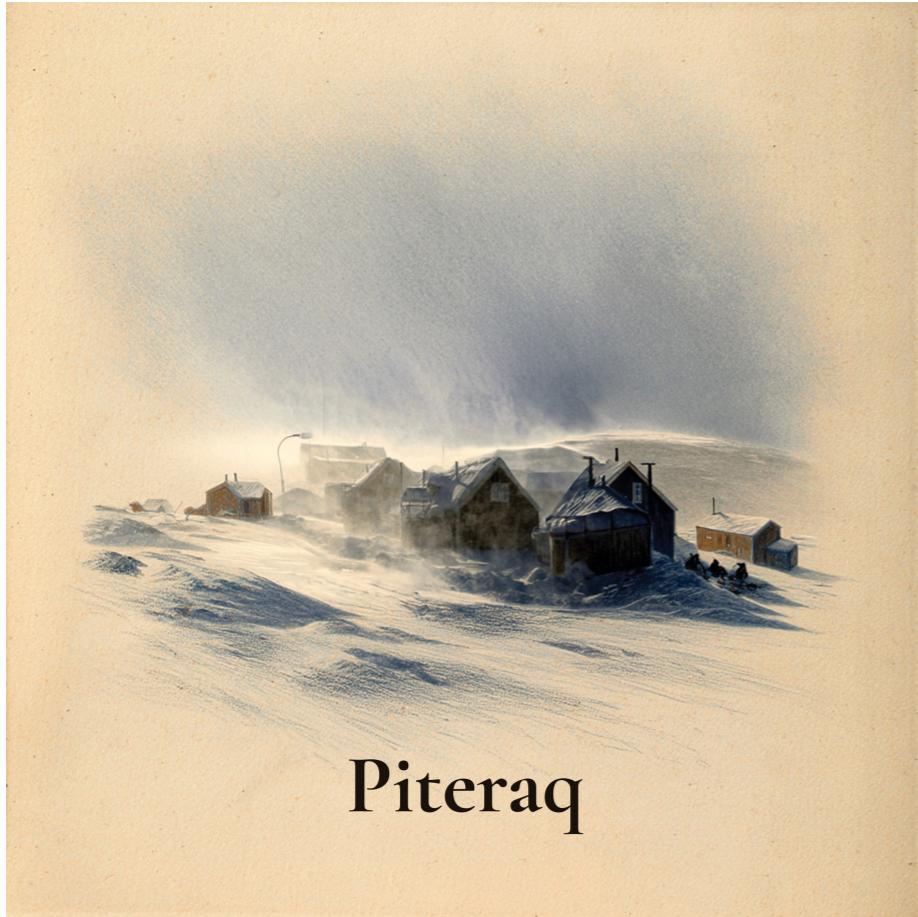
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## Perch

The perch is a common freshwater fish. It perceives its world through a highly developed lateral line system, a series of sensory organs that detect movement and pressure changes in the water. This allows it to hunt effectively in low light and navigate complex underwater environments. The perch is a social creature, often forming schools that move and hunt in unison to enhance their survival. They navigate sunlit freshwater shallows in lakes and rivers shaped by seasonal cycles and currents feeding on insects, crustaceans, and smaller fish.

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## Piteraq

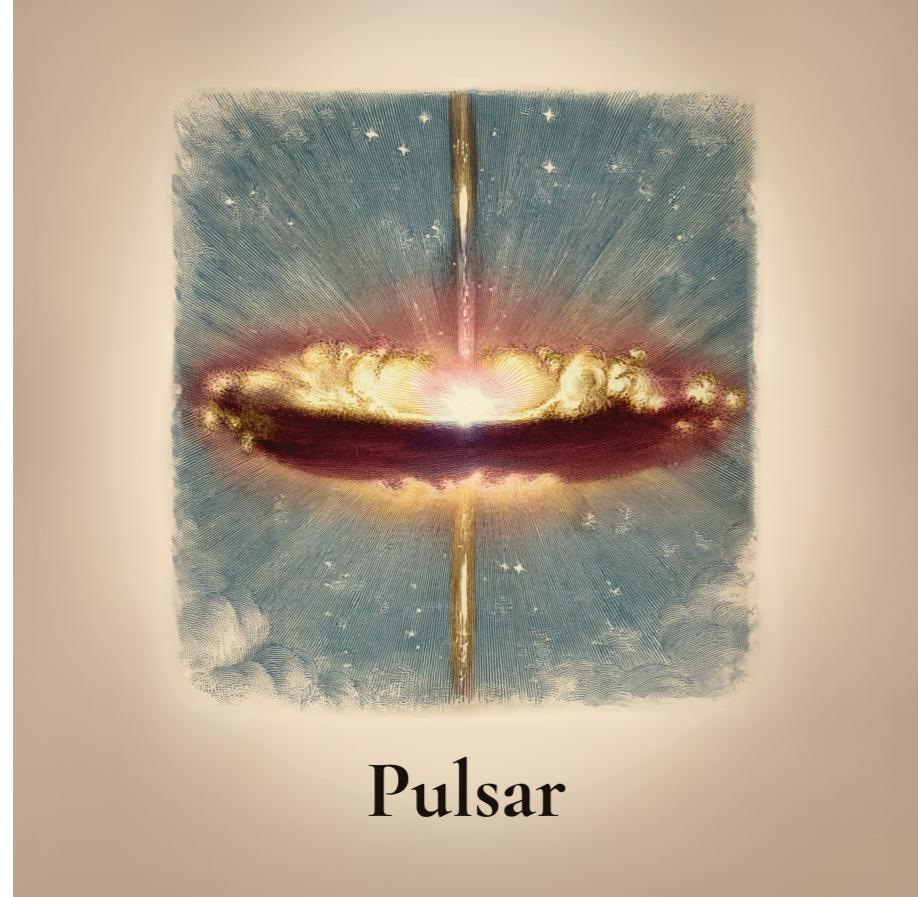
The Piteraq is a katabatic wind, a stream of super-cold, dense air that forms on the high Greenland ice sheet and rushes downhill under the pull of gravity. Its intelligence lies in the relationship between ice, altitude, pressure, and temperature: it gathers force as it descends steep glacial slopes, shaping the coastal fjords and dictating how humans and wildlife build, shelter, and move in eastern Greenland. Though not alive, it behaves with the precision of a natural system reading its own environment, responding instantly to shifts in snowfall, sea ice, and polar darkness. The Piteraq reveals how the Earth expresses its own form of atmospheric reasoning, a power that is as sculpting and severe as it is awe-inspiring.

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## Pulsar

A pulsar is the ultra-dense remnant of a massive star, a neutron star that spins hundreds to thousands of times per second and reveals itself through astonishingly regular bursts of energy. It forms when a giant star collapses under its own gravity and packs more mass than the Sun into a sphere only about 20 kilometers wide, creating matter so dense that a teaspoon would weigh billions of tons. Its intense magnetic field funnels charged particles into narrow beams of radio waves that sweep through space like the beam of a lighthouse. When one of these beams crosses Earth, we detect a perfectly timed pulse. This rhythmic precision, an intelligence rooted in angular momentum, magnetic fields, and extreme physics, makes pulsars reliable cosmic instruments, allowing astronomers to map interstellar gas, test Einstein's theories, and sense distant gravitational waves rippling through the fabric of space.

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## Pygmy Goat



## Quokka

## Pygmy Goat

The pygmy goat is a small, hardy creature that grazes in sunny pastures and rocky hillsides, valued for its curiosity and social charm. Bred for its small size and playful temperament, it is a highly adaptable animal, able to form strong social bonds and thrive in a variety of environments. The pygmy goat is a creature of boundless energy and a mischievous spirit, a charismatic animal that has found a place in the hearts of humans around the world.

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## Quokka

The quokka, a small marsupial from Western Australia, shows a distinctive social intelligence shaped by its island habitats, where limited predators have favored calm, cooperative behaviors. Its well-known “smile” is an anatomical quirk, but its ease around other species reflects an adaptation to stable, resource-rich environments like Rottnest Island off the southwest coast of Australia. Rather than treating newcomers as threats, it approaches them as neutral elements in its landscape. This trait, while emblematic of the species, also exposes a subtle vulnerability, as its continued survival depends on interpreting and adapting to shifting ecological pressures a different kind of intelligence for this placid island dweller.

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## Red Panda



## Reindeer

# Red Panda

The red panda is a solitary, arboreal creature that navigates the cool, misty forests of the Eastern Himalayas and high mountains of China. It uses a keen sense of smell to find its primary food source, bamboo. Its semi-retractable claws and flexible ankles make it an expert climber, allowing it to navigate the forest canopy with ease. The red panda is a creature of the twilight, most active at dawn and dusk. Its life is a slow, deliberate search for food in the misty mountains of its home.

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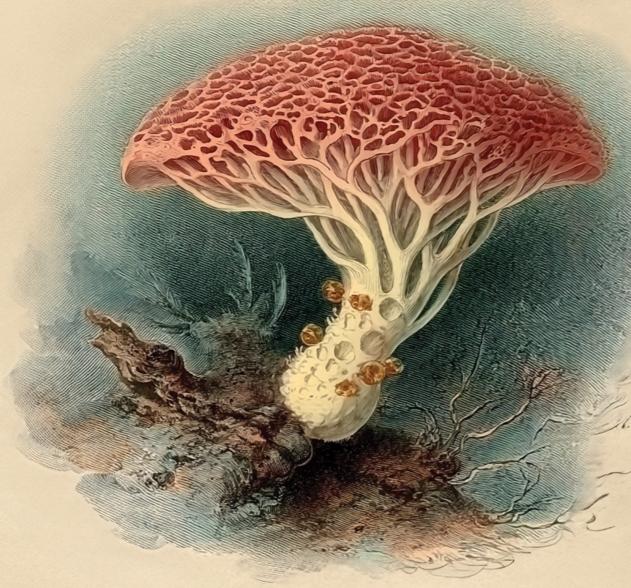
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# Reindeer

Reindeer, or caribou, are Arctic survival experts, roaming frigid landscapes like the Arctic tundra and boreal forests. They undertake epic migrations of up to 3,000 miles, guided by smell, sound, and a sensitivity to the Earth's magnetic fields. Their eyes change color with the seasons, a unique adaptation to the extreme polar light. They can detect lichen hidden deep under the snow, using their broad hooves to dig for it. Communicating through grunts, snorts, and clicks, reindeer are navigators and rhythm keepers, led by the wisdom of their elders.

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## Rhodotus Fungus

# Rhodotus Fungus

The Rhodotus fungus, also called the wrinkled peach, thrives by breaking down dead organic matter, sensing chemical cues that guide it to rotting elm wood where it forms delicate, coral-like structures. Its pink-orange fruiting bodies are fleeting displays of energy drawn from decay, recycling nutrients that sustain countless other organisms. Adapted to the cool, shaded microclimates of temperate forests, the Rhodotus emerges only under precise conditions, reading moisture, temperature, and the chemical signals of decomposing wood. It times its growth to exploit ephemeral windows of opportunity, adjusting its form and color to maximize spore dispersal. In this way, it responds to the rhythms of its habitat and shapes the forest's cycle of life with subtle, exacting precision.

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## Salamander

# Salamander

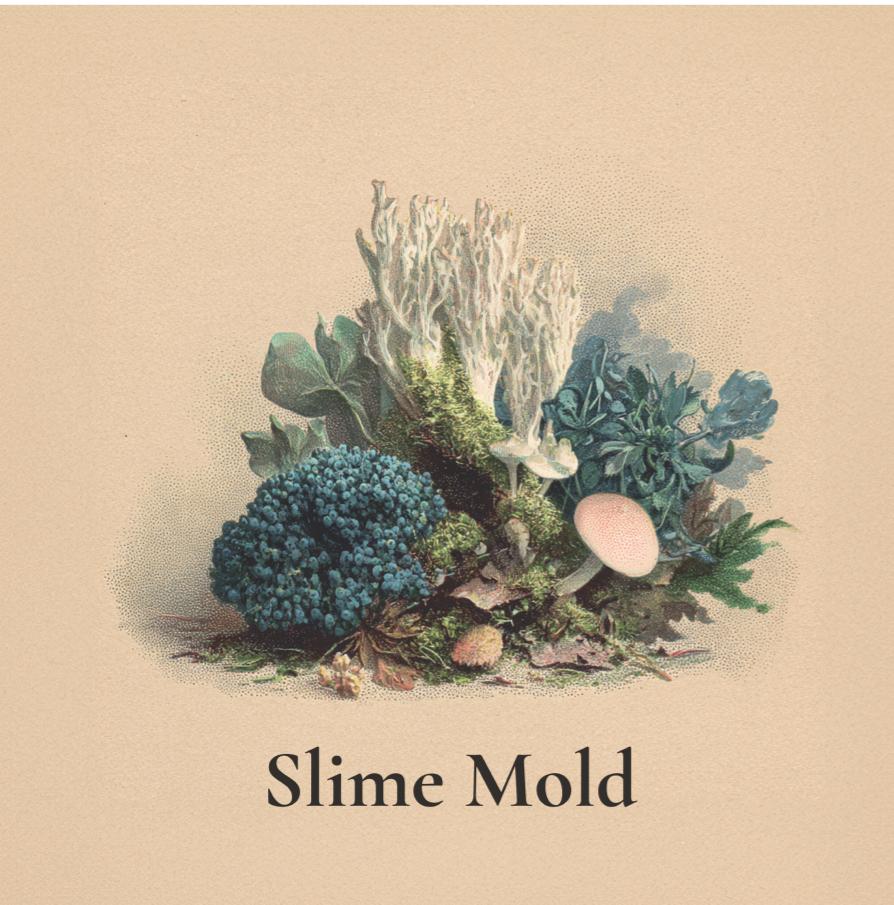
The salamander holds a profound regenerative intelligence within its cells, a biological mastery over its own form. If it loses a limb, it does not just heal; it regrows it perfectly, complete with bone, muscle, and nerve. This quiet amphibian perceives its world through moist skin sensitive to chemical cues and vibrations, but its deepest knowing is internal. This remarkable ability extends to parts of its brain, spinal cord, and heart, a feat unmatched among vertebrates. Scientists study the salamander as a living library of biological possibility, hoping to unlock the secrets of its cellular wisdom for human medicine.

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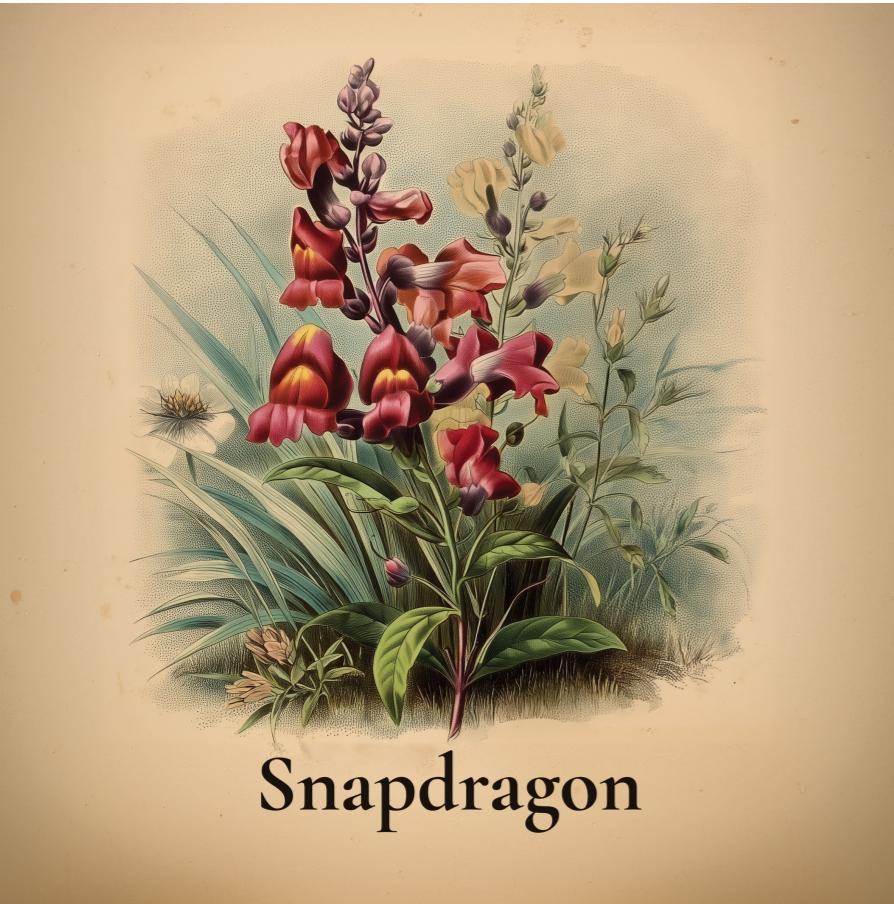


## Slime Mold

# Slime Mold

Slime mold is a slow moving, shapeshifting organism that creeps across forest floors, rotting logs, and damp leaf litter. Neither plant, fungus, nor animal, it has high sensitivity to gradients of light and extends branching tendrils toward food, shuttling nutrients, signals, and cytoplasm into itself. These connections can reorganize themselves dynamically, strengthening high-traffic routes and pruning away those that are underused. During times of food scarcity, it gathers itself into a hardened resting form, until favorable conditions for its thriving return.

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## Snapdragon

# Snapdragon

Snapdragons are flowering plants named for their hinged blossoms, which resemble the head of a dragon and "snap" open at the touch. They are common garden flowers, but their intelligence is a study in botanical ingenuity. Their flowers are shaped in such a way that only bees of a certain size and weight can open them, a form of specialized pollination that ensures their reproductive success. They also exhibit a form of gravitropism, their stems bending towards the light to maximize their exposure to the sun. The snapdragon is a quiet, beautiful example of how plants have evolved to manipulate their environment and the creatures within it to their own advantage.

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## Spanish Moss



## Strontium

# Spanish Moss

Spanish moss is not a moss but a flowering plant, an epiphyte that drapes itself from branches in long, silvery curtains that sway with the wind of trees in the humid American South, absorbing water and nutrients from rainfall and the breeze. Tiny spiders, insects, and birds inhabit its tangled strands, using them for camouflage, nesting, and protection, creating a miniature aerial ecosystem. It is a symbol of the gothic and beautiful, a living curtain that filters the light and whispers the secrets of the swamp.

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# Strontium

Strontium is a soft, silvery earth metal with a unique biological intelligence: it mimics calcium. This allows it to substitute itself into shells, bones, teeth, and coral, creating a permanent record of the environment in which an organism lived. The concentration of strontium in a fossil can reveal information about water temperature, salinity, and oceanic currents from millions of years ago. Time for strontium moves at the pace of atomic decay and mineral formation, its intelligence a slow, geological record of life's history on Earth.

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## Sugar Glider

# Sugar Glider

The sugar glider exhibits a remarkable kinesthetic and spatial intelligence, sailing through the forest canopy on a membrane stretching from wrist to ankle. It perceives its three-dimensional world through large eyes adapted for low light and swiveling ears that pinpoint the faintest sounds. This nocturnal possum navigates the darkness with precision, calculating glides of up to 50 meters, steering with its tail, and landing with soft accuracy. Its intelligence is fast and fluid, allowing it to thrive in the treetops where it forages for sap and nectar, playing a vital role in pollinating native plants.

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## Tantalum

# Tantalum

Tantalum is a rare, silvery-gray metal, its intelligence one of chemical inertness and extreme resilience. It is highly resistant to heat and corrosion, its existence a slow, patient accumulation over billions of years in rare pockets of the Earth. Its ability to store and regulate electrical charge has made it a vital component in modern electronics, from mobile phones to medical implants. Tantalum is a silent, enduring element, its intelligence the quiet, unchanging laws of physics and chemistry, a fundamental building block of our technological world.

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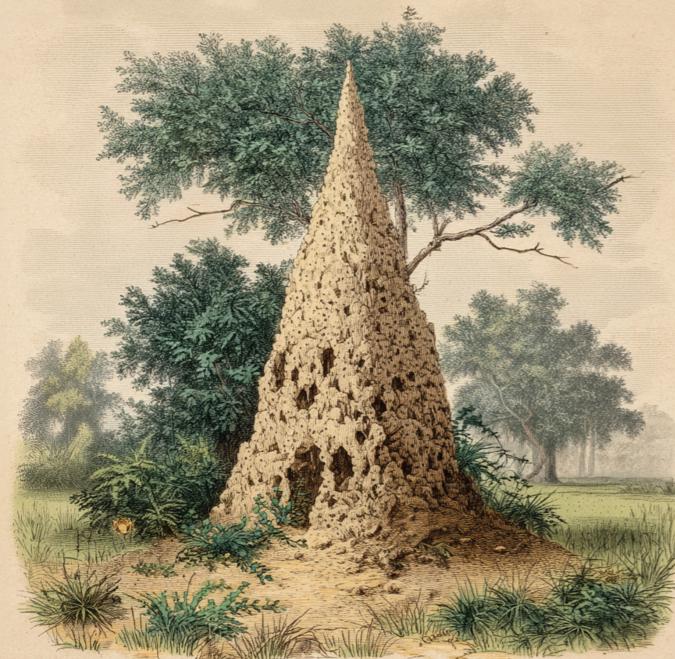
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## Tardigrade



## Termite Mounds

# Tardigrade

Tardigrades, or water bears, are tiny, eight-legged micro-animals renowned as some of Earth's toughest creatures, inhabiting diverse environments ranging from moss to glaciers. Equipped with a simple nervous system and sensory bristles, they detect light, pressure, and chemical changes. Their true genius lies in their ability to enter cryptobiosis, a near-death state where they can withstand boiling, freezing, radiation, and the vacuum of space. These solitary creatures produce a special protein that shields their DNA from damage, allowing them to survive conditions that would be instantly lethal to almost any other known life form.

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# Termite Mounds

Termite mounds, found in warm, dry climates, are living architecture, self-regulating cities built by tiny, blind engineers. Their collective problem-solving, known as stigmergy, emerges from simple interactions with scent trails and tactile cues, allowing them to adjust tunnels and vents to control humidity, temperature, and airflow with a precision that rivals human smart buildings. Inside, they cultivate fungi and care for young, coordinating their efforts through distributed signals that keep internal conditions remarkably stable in harsh environments. A termite mound is not just a home; it is a slow-breathing superorganism, sculpted from instinct, spit, and soil, finely tuned to the rhythms of its habitat.

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## Venus Flytrap

## Venus Flytrap

The Venus flytrap, a botanical predator of the Carolinas' wet savannas and bogs, senses its environment through touch and precise timing. When an unsuspecting insect brushes its sensitive trigger hairs, the trap snaps shut in a fraction of a second, demonstrating electrochemical responsiveness and rapid movement unusual for plants. It can count multiple touches to distinguish prey from debris and tailor its digestive enzymes to different insects. Its roots thrive in nutrient-poor, acidic soils, relying on captured prey to supplement the minerals the habitat cannot provide. The Venus flytrap interprets both mechanical and chemical signals with remarkable precision, coordinating its movements to survive in a demanding ecosystem.

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## Whale

## Whale

Whales live in an acoustic universe, in underwater environments where sound travels four times faster than in air. Their songs are cultural artifacts, evolving year by year as populations share and modify melodies in what may be the longest-running musical tradition on Earth. Some whales can even use sound as a weapon, stunning prey through low clicking sounds rather than through physical harm. Whales navigate by magnetic fields, water temperature, and the contours of underwater mountains they've never seen. Their intelligence is multi-generational, with grandmother whales often guiding their families to feeding grounds through routes memorized over lifetimes.

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## Whanganui River



## Wombat

# Whanganui River

Whanganui River is both a river and a legal person in the North Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand. It is the world's third-longest river, and is also known as Te Awa Tupua, "the river that is an ancestor." It moves through volcanic ash, pumice, mudstone, and sandstone, creating deeply incised gorges and valleys. Unlike other New Zealand rivers that were formed glacially, the Whanganui was formed in soft volcanic terrain, giving it the unusually winding and enclosed shape for which it is famous.

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## Wombat

Wombats are masters of subterranean life, their intelligence rooted in their burrowing habits. They perceive their world through whiskers, paws, and a snout sensitive to minute vibrations and textures in the soil. Their spatial memory is exceptional; they can remember complex burrow layouts and the locations of food sources. Wombats are also known for their unique, cube-shaped scat, which they use to mark their territory. This bizarre adaptation is a form of chemical communication, a way of leaving messages for other wombats in their environment. The wombat is a creature of the earth, its life a quiet, solitary exploration of the world beneath our feet.

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## Wood Frog

# Wood Frog

Wood frogs, small brownish amphibians, possess a remarkable ability to survive being frozen solid. As winter approaches, they perceive the changing temperature and floods their cells with glucose, a natural antifreeze that protects them from ice damage. Their heart stops, breathing ceases, and they enter into a state of suspended animation for up to seven months, before thawing and returning to life in spring. They navigate forests across North America, including the Arctic Circle, remembering routes and landmarks to return to the same breeding pools each year.

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## Wooly Mammoth

# Wooly Mammoth

The wooly mammoth, an extinct relative of the elephant, possessed a social and sensory intelligence adapted to the cold steppe-tundra of the last ice age. They likely communicated using infrasound, low-frequency rumbles that could travel long distances across the frozen plains, allowing them to coordinate movements even when dispersed. Their ability to detect these vibrations through their feet would have been a key part of their herd intelligence. Though they vanished thousands of years ago, their well-preserved remains give us a glimpse into the life of a creature that was a master of survival in a harsh and unforgiving world.

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