

IBATHENE

One of the true terrors of Arduin is the I bathene. Historically, it stomped its way into Arduin with the initial cadre of monsters in Arduin Grimoire I. Most players didn't have an appreciation for how awful this beast was until David Hargrave had it sketched out and wreaked havoc with it at conventions. Dragons were people's big bogeymen back (hey, it was the 1970's) and few things were a greater guarantee of character destruction. Still, even among players some heavy hitters could tackle them and bring their party out more or less alive to save the day. Enter the I bathene. This thing ate dragons for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and not just because it was outrageously godawful strong. I bathene are nasty because it doesn't have a sense of self preservation! It doesn't even know when its dead and keeps fighting on when it should have fallen down/bled out/turned to dust! Even your apocryphal bad guys blink in the face of the that kind of shit; hell, even Silver Slyth hate to devour I bathene because they keep trying to crawl out/keep fighting when they are being digested. Perhaps the only merciful things about them is that they are slow in action once in melee though they can move with great speed in regards to their bulk. Oh, and did I mention you can run into more than one at a time?!? While they are not much for helping each other (team Olympics is not their strength) they will hungrily jump on anything together in a chaotic and rather deadly fashion.

I bathene, for all there nastiness, are surprisingly hunted. It may be a foreign idea, given how tough these crazy things happen to be, but it happens. In fact, its the topmost creature you can bag from the Kzar-Txar (death beings) that the Gogun Kuryl list as their life enemies. Given that that organization hunts the ice lands north of Ghorfar and lists Grey Ghosts, Morghouls, Dragons, Trivern and other ridiculously strong beings as Kzar-Txar, its a given they would target I bathene. Especially since the I bathene that roam the ice lands beyond of the mountains that form the northernmost border of Ghorfar are the ones who in turn hunted the Dragons that used to lair in that region to extinction. The plethora of Wyverns and Triverns that infest the area seemed to have fared better, since they exist in considerable numbers. In fact, this organization and the frosty wastes north of Ghorfar were the focus of an elimination tournament in 1999, where nine teams of players made of hunters from Gogun Kuryl tried to complete the whole list of 83 Kzar-Txar. Over the first two days of the convention, five teams made it through 61 of them before they were eliminated. Of the final four teams, thee of them perished on either the Spiga or I bathene, with the fourth taking down the I bathene only after they herded a brace of crippled Trivern to distract it. The final team lost all but 2 of their 7 members to perms-death. One of them threw out a nice bit of poetry on the spot, which I've recorded below.

*The wintry demon, the hungry devil of the waste
My mind screams run, your life it wants to taste
But valor and bravery compels, to follow the beast
To slay the Kzar-Txar, our people to avoid their feast
This creature is so deadly, dangerous and free*

*Master of its domain, master of the wintry ice sea
The other beasts know to move away
We, the Gogun Kuryl, trail and will not go astray¹*

¹ Okay, its not that good but he did come up with it on the spot and earn a mile of experience, not to mention win the convention prizes!

Of course, this is far from the only tale about the I bathene. For example, Marsilla ap Tsunyadi, spoke of the following about the I bathene, those only tangentially in regards to the use of its flesh to open a pathway to the Sunken Oracle of the Rainbow Isles².

"Prior to my departure, Ardanía (the head of the Tsunyadi) entreated the best and bravest to consult the Sunken Oracle. It was her belief that it could help them identify where their most precious item had gone. Fifteen Amazons and their companions stood up to take up that charge. Through many trials and challenges, the fifteen succeeded in gathering the sacred items to light the stones of the Rainbow Isles. To Arong'en they took the blood of the drake and the flesh of an I bathene. To Avonglen they carried a gasp of air and the essence of sacrifice. To Her'agol was brought the confounding of fear and virtue in the face of doom. Lastly, at Orgluryl they played Schuli Acholla's tune and shed the blood of what came to its call. When the crash of weapons and the burning powers of magic died out, the last seven stood to watch the unfolding of the door to the Sunken Oracle. The rainbow waters in betwixt the isles split with a great roar, the water pouring back to create a great tunnel downwards.

The walk down that corridor of water, surrounding by the grumbling power of the sea was one of faith and barely hidden fear. Its ending brought no surcease to that tension. Giant beams of stone shot with rainbow hues of jade formed a massive temple. A paean of power beat out from the temple and it seemed to extend in directions and dimensions just beyond sight. The oracle was inside, a great feminine face formed of jade that seemed to change with the color of the sea.

One by one, they asked their questions, until the seventh and final Amazon finished. Then, one small figure leaped down from one of the Amazons and approached the oracle. It bowed as best its 4-legged form allowed and posed its own question to the oracle. The oracle looked upon the cat with terrible intensity and it trembled at the weight of that gaze. Then the oracle laughed. And answered the feline's question. So sealing the desperate ploy by Ardanía, for the cat was no less than her own familiar."

South of Mickleby, in Arduin, on the edge of the wood and the south border of the domains belonging to the House Star Bear, lays the I bathene Tower. None have forgotten that horrible place and all but the foolish trek around its shadowed region of the forest. Its more than legend and child's rhyme that speaks of the binding of a brood of I bathene to the tower. Only the unholy rejuvenation of the Guug and their children keep the I bathene from bursting free to wreak havoc on the area. That, and of course, the firm stones welded in the blood of the innocent and the brave, bitter warrior and cowardly knave. Not that House Star Bear has the greatest claim to the place. The Arduin noble house Grey Stallion was founded by Alegbrath Gottradung, a hero of some import, and noted for his expeditions into the Tower of the I bathene. His greatest claim to fame was to have severed one of the feared beast's eyestalk, and its petrified remains once stood as the house's greatest monument. It was stolen shortly after Alegbrath's death and is the noble house's most sought after object. Each generation swears great oaths to return it to the house but each has yet to make good such declarations. Speaking of body parts and I bathene, the fallen House of the I bathene used to keep several parts of an I bathene as a showcase, even forging an eye from an I bathene into a fell and powerful item known as the Coralsome Ocular. Garnished with precious stones and set in silveel, it was as big as a Throon's fist and was reputed to hold the key to another world in its pupil. Or, so it was said. During the Raze of Houses after the Black Queen's Rebellion in Arduin history, the House of the I bathene fell to the Black Pantheon Hunters, its blood spilled and lost to history and Arduin forever.

2 You read more about it here: <http://rpggeek.com/forum/708714/arduin-eternal/sessions>

Of course, famously, who could not remember that the Ibathene is one of the Ineffable beasts of Maruk's Seven Sevens Quest³?

Tales, for all their power, do not illustrate facts about the beast that an interested hunter, apt scholar or intrigued gentleman would express interest over. It takes a more concise digest of information to appease that appetite. For that, see below.

HD: 30 to 50

AC: 2+1 overall, 2 on the belly, 3 on the eye stalks

Speed: 24" (32" at charge, ½ in water)

Dext: 9 to 12

Numbers: 1d6

%Liar: too stupid

Attacks: The tongue can reach as many feet as it has HD, it wraps stickily around any targets inflicting d12 to 2d12 crush as well as automatically haul in those hit into its maw next turn for 6-60 to 8-80 bite damage; 2 claw attacks for 3-36 to 5-50 each OR instead it uses a tail smash against an area, inflicting 4-48 to 6-72 HP damage (this attack hits an entire area, damaging all within).

Looks: 60 to 120 ft long reptile with one eye on a long, snake-like stalk, bright green overall, red belly, yellow eye stalk.

Notes: The tongue can lift its own HD in creatures with no trouble. The claws can snatch up to 6 targets if within 20 ft of each other, inflicting damage to all. They are so stupid they fight on after killed, still going 1-20 turns (rolls) afterward, because they don't know they are dead!



The above Arduin Grimoire (AG) stats more than illustrate just how tough these pug-uglies were! Add to the fact that they are roaming predators that can take down other dominant predators and you start to see why they are both hated and reviled, and not just by the civilized. When they come into the territory of other apex predators, the smart ones give way or become part of the Ibathene's meal until it moves on. Given that it doesn't lair; it pretty much trundles along until it gets tired enough to sleep, in which it drops in place until its rested to move on. Even that is erratic as they have no sense of their bodies; still its been used against them⁴.

Tactically they are brute force, opportunity-driven predators. If they come across it, they eat it, especially if its alive and wriggling. They seem to sense the world around a couple of different ways, the eye at the end of their prominent eyestalk not necessarily

³ For more information, you'll need to head over to <http://empcho.blogspot.com/2011/10/seven-sevens-quest.html>.

⁴ In fact, that's how the Myrmydios Mountains Ibathene was killed. The three dozen Half-Hobbits survivors whose home it decimated are credited with keeping it moving and running for nearly a month until it stopped in utter exhaustion. Then they crept in and killed it by lighting explosive and dumping it down its throat.

their primarily means of sight. They seem to look/sense body heat and vibrations, even at some distance, especially for high heat signature/large creatures. Being forced to the ground also doesn't work, since its about as wriggly as an alligator in water and sinuous as a serpent on the ground.

Take into account that they are often seen in numbers then true fear begins to creep in. At least one account tells of how a duo of these bastards dug out a phraint hive on the Great Grass Plains to eat their queen. Its a common theme. In fact, Morvaen three of these beasts leveled the fortified town of Thronkarl in less than two days, despite the spirited defense of the Four Thanes⁵.

When Arduin moved to its mid-90's game system, lbathene didn't get any weaker.

BF: 180

HP: 240-400

MRS: 12%

AV: 14 (overall), 13 (undersides), 14 (eye stalks)

Speed: 240', 320' at charge, half that in water

CF: 9-12

Numbers: 1-6

Looks: 60 to 120 ft long reptile with one eye on a long, snake-like stalk, bright green overall, brick red belly, yellow eye stalk. Its claws and fangs are coal black, as are its double row of dorsal spines.

Attack: The tongue can reach 1 ft for each 10 HP of size. It wraps around a victim doing d12+12 HP of crush damage and then hauls those it has hit and captured into its maw the next CF Move for 6d10 to 8d10 bite damage. After biting, it will swallow the victim. Then d3 melee rounds later a 3d8 to 6d8 potency stomach acid will finishe off what's left. Its two claws do 2d12+12 to 2d10+30 each or it can instead tail smash for d20+28 to d20+52 HP damage. The tongue can lift a fully armored man and warhorse simulataneously with no trouble. The very large and long taloned claws can snatch up to six men at the same time. lbathene are so stupid they fight d20 melee rounds after they are killed, because they don't know they are dead! These things actually hunt down wyverns, hydras, and small dragons for lunch! They never feel fear, but are easily fooled or confused. They are usually found in or near large forests where water is plentiful and game dumber than them is abundant.

As you can see, the game designers did update its appearance and details a little bit. It's follow up bite and swallow was detailed. A nasty fate for something: crushing, slashing/piercing followed by acidic destruction. Enough to take out even regenerating/immortal types if they are not careful. Still, their overall lack of smart and ferocity often gets them killed against the savvy opponent. The Melkalund Duo, skulking around some recently uncovered ruins⁶ reported watching a vampyr take one apart from the inside, turning insubstantial, letting itself get sucked up via its nostrils, and then letting recorporating long enough to let loose magik some serious magik. Even then it didn't come out unscathed, since they reported it was still smoking and clouded in acrid fumes. Ne-Troth the Bold⁷ used the same tactic against another one, using magic to become a vapor, though he failed to slay it.

5 They made a story out of it, the Gallant Four Against Hell's Three, and renamed the premier military institute in the capitol city of Harphanx after the first Thane. Buy a Morvaenian soldier a drink and he'll tell you all about it.

6 I'll probably loose my life for mentioning this but the ruins were uncovered by them in the first place when they set off a series of explosions using some alien plastique...

7 That's being nice; most students of the Lidded Eye (his school) call him Ne-Troth the Stupid, since he forget to monitor how long he could stay insubstantial and ended up becoming material inside it...

When it came time to move them in Emperors Choice Games & Miniatures latest game system, Arduin Eternal, they didn't grow any weaker either.

STR: 358 **ADROIT:** 20
REF: 19 **CHAR:** 18
MASS: 409 **ESS:** 333
EGO: 44 **SIZE:** 211
REAS: 5 **CON :** 282
WITS: 15

BODY: 978 **MA:** 20 **CF:** 34
COORD: 39 **APT:** 353 **LEAD:** 62
HP: 1160

DEF: 230 (DR:34) **MD:** 111 (MR:12)
PD: Immune

PER: 101 **DODGE:** 0
MOVE: 120

FEAR: Immune **SHOCK:** 414
P/V: 255 **DISEASE:** 199

Trainability: Impossible **Breed TD:** 175
Quick Rank: 75

Ath: 409, **Cl:** 54, **Co:** 90, **Gu:** 77, **Mi:** 51, **Re:** 122, **SC:** 86, **Wi:** 125, **Wpn [Bite]:** 124, **Wpn [Claw]:** 93, **Wpn [Tail]:** 77, **Wpn [Tongue]:** 143

Secrets: Second Parry [Gu], Combat Maneuvering [Ath], Battle Cry [Mi], Track [Re]

Tactics: Uncaring, Destructive Predator. They are a roving predator that follows prey, devouring everything in an area and then moving on.

Attack Combination: It attacks primarily with its tongue, which is half its length. It grabs and constricts with the tongue and then bites and swallows its prey.

♦ **Secrets:** Spread Attack [Wpn], Steal Weapon (tongue) [Co]

♦ **Bite:** +175, **D:** 5d8+84, **ER:** L, **C:** 69, **F:** 1, [S]. After biting once, it will swallow its prey on the next CF Action Count, living or dead. Those swallowed suffer 2d4+5 BODY damage from stomach acid until dissolved.

♦ **Tongue:** +182, **C:** 100, **F:** 5, [B]. Its tongue can reach 100 ft and wraps around its victim, inflicting 4d6+18 HP damage. The next CF Action Count it draws prey in and bites them (see Bite). It can lift 270 BODY worth of creatures with its tongue.

Attack Combination: It can fight with its claws (all four) and often does against large prey, as well as use its tail (one-third its size in length) for smashing attacks.

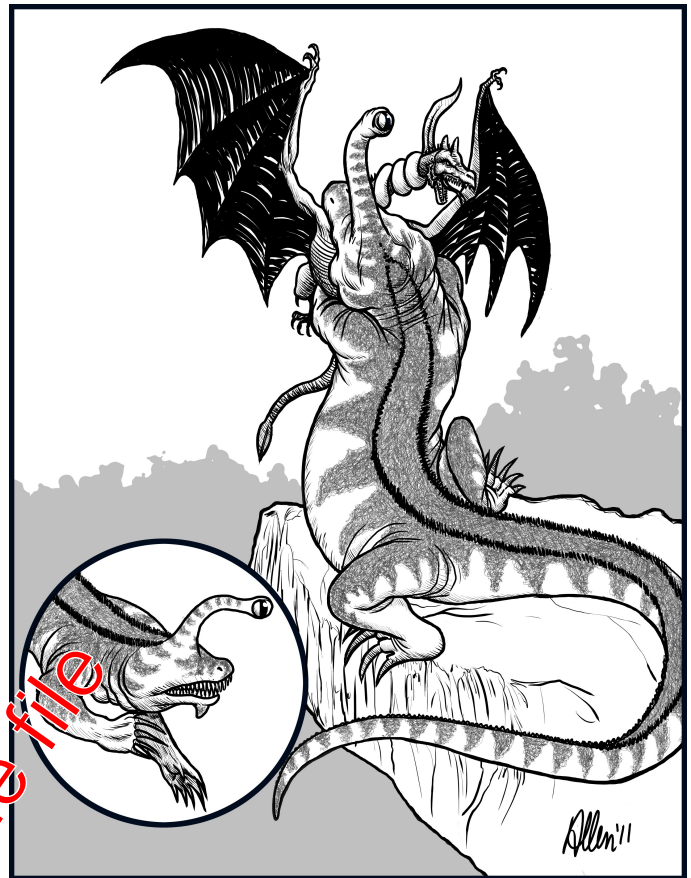
♦ **Secrets:** Spread Attack [Wpn], Concussive Strike [Co]

♦ **Claws:** +153, **D:** 5d12+53, **ER:** XL, **C:** 83, **F:** 2, [S].

♦ **Tail:** +103, **D:** 6d10+68, **ER:** XL, **C:** 84, **F:** 5, [B].

Ibathene Physiology: Ibathene have a strange physiology.

♦ Ibathene have such a retarded nervous system that they don't realize they are dead



when reduced to zero HP until d4 minutes afterward.

- ♦ I bathene have FORT 20 and WARD 50.

- ♦ I bathene have keen senses and can see clearly in complete darkness, though in black and white. They also pick up ground vibrations within 120 ft.

Lore: They are found in or near large forests where water is plentiful and game dumber than them is abundant. These things actually hunt down wyverns, hydras, and small dragons.

No document talking about the I bathen would be complete without talking about some of the famous ones or famous things named *after* them. For an example of the latter, the martial arts technique One I bathene Hand sums it up perfectly. Its a masterpiece of the fighting system constructed by the non-passed on martial great Breton Lighting Hand. The newish mark of the Maragore nation is an I bathene, said to be the personal saint for the barbarian king that now runs the land. As for infamous or famous ones, well Its a rare fool who hasn't heard of the Beryl I bathene that hunts the ranges of the Great Green Forever, the stones of an arcane meteorite piercing its hide. They say it looks like the million eyes of hell in the darkness and the trees, as if having an I bathene out hunting wasn't fear inspiring enough.

Sample file