

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

ALIENS

Sparrials[™]



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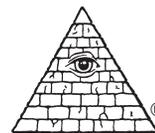
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Stock #37-1684

Version 1.0 – December 2015



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“Disarmed. Trapped in our own cargo hold. Pirates looting the ship.” Captain Ti sighed. “Any ideas?”

Nursing a broken arm, ship security said, “Only if we had weapons.”

Alanoomi, their sparrial cook, coughed and kicked a wall panel. It popped open. Several blasters spilled out.

“Illegal guns. Why am I not surprised?” Ti said. “And the locked doors, Al?”

Alanoomi held up her lockpicks. “On it, Cap’n!”

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INTRODUCTION

Whether in fantasy or science fiction, races of tricksters and thieves are common. Sparrials, a race of starfaring filches and hotshots, certainly fit the description! That's not all they can do, of course; this flexible species can be spies, primitive natives, ambassadors, troubleshooters, smugglers, psionic masterminds, or the quirky medic who patches everyone up and feeds them exotic home cooking.

Furthermore, they're perfectly adaptable to a fantasy campaign, whether part of the world from the beginning, or newfound residents of a mysterious island or hidden valley. Perhaps those pointy-eared "elves" in the forest will pick your pockets when you visit . . .

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

GURPS Space and *GURPS Ultra-Tech* are referred to heavily in *GURPS Aliens: Sparrials*. *GURPS Bio-Tech*, *GURPS Spaceships*, and *GURPS Psionic Powers* could also come in handy. If using sparrials in a fantasy setting, consider *GURPS Fantasy* and *GURPS Magic* instead!

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Sparrials originally appeared in *Roleplayer* #10, *GURPS Space* for Third Edition, and *GURPS Aliens* for Third Edition. *GURPS Aliens: Sparrials* expands and updates them for *GURPS Fourth Edition*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth McCoy co-authored *GURPS In Nomine* and *GURPS IOU*, as well as authoring, co-authoring, and editing any number of *In Nomine* books. She self-publishes science fiction, fantasy, and fantasy-romance (available in ebook forms from Smashwords and

Amazon, among other places), and has short stories in small-press anthologies. With Steve Jackson's permission, sparrials have shown up in some of her SF short stories. She thanks Christopher R. Rice for formatting assistance!

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow – see what's new at gurps.sjgames.com.

Warehouse 23. Our online store offers *GURPS* adventures, play aids, and support in PDF form . . . digital copies of our books, plus exclusive material available only on Warehouse 23! Just head over to warehouse23.com.

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. To discuss *GURPS* with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at forums.sjgames.com. The web page for *GURPS Aliens: Sparrials* can be found at gurps.sjgames.com/sparrials.

Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

I didn't notice I was being set upon by a pickpocket, which I am glad of, because I like to work only with professionals.

*– Douglas Adams and Mark Carwardine,
Last Chance to See*

Optional Traits

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; Enhanced Dodge; Perfect Balance; Rapier Wit. For non-sparrials, the sparrial language.

Disadvantages: On the Edge; Overconfidence. (Sometimes Ssararo get a little too self-assured about their skills. These are *not* considered “ideal” disadvantages!)

Skills: Sling (used to deliver stink-bombs from a distance).

Perks: Sure-Footed (Rachou). See pp. 26-27 for rachou information. Otherwise, fighting from the broad back of a rachou counts as bad footing (pp. B547 and B549).

* Biting Mastery for Ssaralooro is a cinematic combat version of Hands-Free (*Power-Ups 2*, p. 16), which allows Judo grappling and throws using mouth-holds. Make a Judo roll after a successful dodge; the sparrial is presumed to have gotten out of the way, then “grabbed” a hand or clothing in his mouth.

Other Appropriate Traits for Ssararo

A Ssararo, much like a human martial artist, strives to be calm and alert. Sparrials add the ideal of “Pinpoint Accuracy When Being Annoying.” The stereotypical master Ssararo would have Danger Sense, High Pain Threshold, Indomitable, Rapier Wit, and Unfazeable. A cinematic Ssararo would have Trained by a Master, of course, and might have a level or two of Silence, Slippery, or Striking ST – as well as any other ability attributed to cinematic human martial artists.

PSIONICS

If the GM desires, sparrial characters may have access to psionics. They especially might have a racial tendency to be *anti-psi*, making them difficult to push around psychically! Thematically, they’re not likely to have notable ability with any other power; powerful sparrial psionics on a quest for galactic domination are not typically useful for a campaign.

Suggested abilities from *GURPS Psionic Powers* include:

Power	Ability	Page(s)
Anti-Psi	Psionic Shield	24-25
	Psi Static	26
Ergokinesis	Confuse	32-33
	Electric Vision	33
ESP	Combat Sense	37
	Awareness	39-40
	Visions (any type)	39
	Psi Sense	41
	Psidar	41-42
	Psychic Hunches	42
Probability Alteration	Combat Sense	45
	Second Chance	45
Psychic Healing	Aura Reading	46
	Cure	46-47
	Regeneration	49
Telepathy	Emotion Sense	58
	Mind Shield	66-67

Most of the perks for Probability Alteration (*Psionic Powers*, p. 44) are also appropriate. An additional ESP ability might be *Clairosmia*, below.

Note that Psychic Vampirism is *not* included in this list! It may be a kind of theft, but the creepy-factor is not thematically compatible with the more straightforward sparrial personality. Naturally, if the GM needs an Evil Sparrial Mastermind, this would be the first section to peruse.

New Ability: Clairosmia

13 points for level 1, plus 5 points for each additional level

This functions like Clairaudience (*Psionic Powers*, p. 40) but only affects the sense of smell and has a longer range by default. A sparrial ESPer who uses Clairosmia would be able to make a Per roll to identify things like the number of people in a room and their individual emotional states. They might have some idea of the long-term emotional states, too, by the lingering aromas – e.g., a recent argument or consensual canoodling.

Statistics: Clairsentience (Clairosmia, -60%; ESP, -10%; Fixed Range, -5%) [13]. Further levels add Increased Range, one level at a time [+5/level].

SPELLS

Sparrials *can* be used in a campaign with magic. Sparrial shamans could confound spacefaring races, or “magi-tech” may be the order of the day for the entire campaign. Sparrials would be particularly interested in spells pertaining to stealing, catching thieves in the act, creating food, letting the caster function without food for longer than usual, and enabling the mage to go more places, faster.

A short list of spells* from the *Basic Set* that would particularly entertain sparrials include:

Air (pp. B242-244): Purify Air, No-Smell, Walk on Air, Stench.

Body Control (pp. B244-245): Spasm, Clumsiness.

Healing (pp. B248-259): All of them.

Light and Darkness (pp. B249-250): Blur.

Mind Control (pp. B250-251): Daze.

Movement (p. B251): All of them.

Protection and Warning (pp. B252-253): Armor, Magelock.

* Less-interesting prerequisites aren’t listed, but they remain necessary.

Odo: You’re Betazoid?

Lwaxana Troi: Of course.

Odo: Telepathic?

Lwaxana Troi: Yes.

Odo: And you sense no guilt anywhere in this room?

Lwaxana Troi: No. But Betazoids cannot read Ferengis.

– *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine #1.16*

RACE RELATIONS

Sparrials, as a race, are “live and let live.” Many are curious about newcomers, enjoying the stimulation of New People and New Stories, and evaluating ideas (and possessions) for possible theft. Most ignore or are annoyed by assumptions that their lives require change – if they want change, they’ll take it, thank you very much. Aside from those generalities, their reactions to other sapient species are individualistic, just like everything else in their society.

Naturally, sparrials get along best with species that respect their desire for independence and that can handle their forms of confrontation. They get along poorly with races that prefer rigid organization, a pecking order built on a linear hierarchy, or extreme displays of subservience. Even a sparrial who considers himself less dominant than someone else has his pride.

The sparrial sense of smell also influences racial relations. If they *like* the odor of a given species, they may put up with silly rules just to be near them. Or they may hang around and be *irritating* while they inhale happily! See *The Smell’s the Thing*, pp. 6-7.

Sparrials don’t really pay attention to other races’ idea of status. While they’re affected normally by Reputation, just about any other social advantage (or disadvantage) will have to be backed up *in the sparrial’s opinion* by the other person’s abilities. Being born into wealth and power never impresses

sparrials; they’re only influenced by such displays that were gotten via skill. It’s up to the GM to decide if sparrials respect any given institution enough to assume Rank is earned.

Alanoomi, stay out of the nice bird-alien’s luggage, please.

When other races deal with sparrials, they quickly learn that “trade” is . . . complicated. Sparrials themselves have many patterns, from a straightforward exchange of barter goods or credits (after haggling), to a complicated ritual where one sparrial steals the products while the other steals payment for them. This leads alien shopkeepers to tactics such as hiring employees to stand by the door and request the return of any unpaid-for items, setting out easily filched and inexpensive knickknacks, or investing in very good security systems.

Visitors to Sparrion or other locations with lots of sparrials are advised to invest in “theft belts” – flimsy plastic chain links with baubles or cheap toys attached. Sparrials enjoy the challenge of removing a doodad without getting spotted, and they generally ignore more boring things like wallets or weapons.

SPARRIALS IN THE GAME

With a racial cost of 24 points, sparrials are a good choice for PCs in the typical 150-point campaign. Nosy and Wanderlust quirks enable them to be proactive in seeking out adventure or grabbing plot hooks the GM leaves in their path. Kleptomania is also sure to invite trouble, whether a minor barroom brawl when some non-sparrial objects to losing a wallet, or a campaign starter if they wind up with something Really Important. If a campaign has the “thief/spy” niche open, sparrials are an archetypical shoo-in. Sparrials are *not* very strong, compared to humans; while this may not matter when beam weapons or powered armor are available, players who frequently want to thump things are likely to be disappointed.

Players of sparrials and the GM should consider the comfort level of other players when doing “intro scenes,” lest the initial racial pushiness be upsetting, not fun. In some groups, a sparrial should take an “Easygoing” quirk or buy off Proud.

Although “thief” and “smuggler” are valid and common roles, sparrials are versatile choices for both PCs and NPCs. They can be medics or counselors, using the Emotion Sense of their Discriminatory Smell and its attendant Detect Lies ability to get to the heart of a patient’s worries. They might be part of rescue teams, clambering around mountains and forests to find wounded hikers, soldiers, or colonists. Their Night Vision and Temperature Tolerance mean they have a slight edge as first-in scouts or archaeologists seeking Precursor sites (see *GURPS Space*, p. 22).

In the right organization, a sparrial who’s (relatively) willing to take orders could be a military scout or sniper. Cultural tendencies produce sparrials who are master chefs, performers, and teachers. Those who fall in with criminals make excellent assassins and blackmailer-spies, but they’re rarely found as common muggers. And finally, sparrial-crewed vessels could be perfectly legitimate passenger-ships or merchants that hardly *ever* smuggle anything. Or anyone. Really.

No matter their occupation, they’ll still swipe things – and give them back if asked.

Sparrials for the GM

As NPCs, sparrials are the obvious choice to *remove* something from the player characters and get them chasing after it. They’re excellent nuisances, being small, clever, aggressive, and insatiably curious – much like 10-year-olds, only more capable. Sparrials want to see and try everything, and if adventuring looks fun and interesting, a sparrial might join the first bunch of adventurers to wander by – without asking permission.

Sparrials can be good Allies, Contacts, and Enemies. They’re especially good at being Rivals (see p. B135), ready to appear, upstage the PCs, foil their plans, and swing off with the gold, glory, and members of the appropriate gender. Or a sparrial can be a ruthless assassin who wants one of the group *dead*.

ST: 1 **HP:** 1 **Speed:** 4.50
DX: 8 **Will:** 3 (Domestic)/5 (Wild) **Move:** 4
IQ: 2 **Per:** 10 **Weight:** 1.5 lbs.
HT: 10 **FP:** 10 **SM:** -4
Dodge: 7 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 0

Bite (8): Negligible damage; can draw blood. Reach C.

Traits: Combat Paralysis; Domestic (or Wild) Animal; Fur; Quadruped.

Skills: Stealth-10 (12 for wild nuleou).

Cost: \$10-25 for an average nulea intended for consumption; \$100+ for wool-producing nuleou.

Notes: Native gravity 0.95G.

“Doing good!” Naaleraan
called to the tourist.

“It’s upside down!”
he yelled.

“And you not fall off!”
Great!”

“It’s going to sleep now!”
Naal sighed and started
up.

MOUNTS

While modern sparrials adore starships and any other high-tech vehicle that allows them to move quickly (hoverbikes are *very* popular, if available), some herders still follow the old ways.

Rauachon

17 points

Rauachon (singular: rachou) are creatures that generally need to be seen to be believed; “giant snake-necked sloth-goats” is the most apt description. They are primarily herbivorous quadrupeds, though they’ll munch on carrion opportunistically. They’re covered in coarse, shaggy fur and are about the size of a dairy cow. They have curled claws on their feet, somewhat sloth-like. Their necks are somewhat elongated. They have no horns, but the shape of their heads is indeed goatlike, and they have horizontally set slit pupils like a goat.

They are marsupials, bearing one to four young at a time, who remain in the mother’s pouch for approximately six Terran months. They then ride on their mother’s back – or that of any other herd member who doesn’t shake them off – for another six months. They become capable of breeding

at approximately two years of age. For the first year of their lives, the entire herd will defend them against predators, sitting shoulder to shoulder and waving their long, clawed forelimbs menacingly.

Though rauachon primarily travel on the ground, grazing as they meander along, they are capable of climbing (slowly) and will stray a short way up sturdy trees in search of foliage and fruit. They are equally happy to clamber about on rocks in more mountainous regions. They are capable of bursts of speed, such as when an immature rachou of the herd is threatened, but otherwise rarely bother.

Rauachon are diurnal, though they also take frequent naps. They prefer to sleep hanging from trees or cliff faces.

The sparrials who herd rauachon for meat, hides, and fur tend to be among the most patient of the species. Ambling along at the herd’s speed is intolerably slow for many sparrials.

Rachou-herders frequently accustom their favorites to being ridden – bareback, with a sparrial clinging cheerfully to the animal’s fur as he straddles the rotund body. With the coming of aliens to Sparrion, the concept of “saddles” was introduced to the rachou-herders, who promptly laughed themselves into little piles on the ground before setting out to train their beasts to tolerate harnesses. (It’s inefficient to put a saddle on something that occasionally decides to climb trees or cliffsides.)

Rauachon are poor choices for pulling wagons, due to the aforementioned climbing. They are also not very milkable, as they object to hands inside their pouches. This doesn’t keep sparrials from *trying*, but even light-fingered sparrials have limits.

ST: 20 **HP:** 20 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 10 **Will:** 12 **Move:** 6
IQ: 3 **Per:** 11 **Weight:** 1,200 lbs.
HT: 14 **FP:** 14 **SM:** +2 (3 hexes)

Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 2

Weak Bite (13): 2d-4 crushing. Reach C, 1.

Talons (13): 2d cutting or impaling. Reach C-2.

Traits: Acute Hearing 2; Domestic (or Wild) Animal; Fur; Long Arms (+1 SM); Quadruped; Stubbornness; Temperature Tolerance 1.

Skills: Brawling-13; Climbing-13.

Cost: An untrained rachou that is accustomed to people is \$1,000. A rachou who tolerates a rider is \$1,500. A rachou who tolerates a *harness* that a rider can fasten himself to is \$1,700-\$2,000. Use the higher end of the price range for one that tolerates the thump of bags against its sides as well as the harness they’re attached to. Expect to pay \$3,000 and up for a *racine* rachou, with Enhanced Move 1 (Ground).

Notes: Native gravity 0.95G. While they have Move 6, they more commonly use a fast amble of Move 3. This can surprise someone who thought that was as speedy as rauachon ever got.

Rachou Gear

Sparrials – or other sapients – can use certain items to stay on a rachou and possibly even steer it. Bonuses to control rauachon only offset penalties to Riding skill; they do not give a net bonus.

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*A zealous locksmith died of late,
And did arrive at heaven gate.
He stood without and would not knock,
Because he meant to pick the lock.*

– William Camden

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