

Wildwood

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Acknowledgments

(Thomas Knauss) - I'd like to thank everyone who gave us the opportunity to bring Wildwood to life. To the development team of Bastion Press, especially Jim Butler, Kevin Melka, Steve Creech, Hal Greenberg and Darrin Drader and our dedicated group of playtesters for their support and contributions toward this project. On a more personal note, I'd like to thank my wife, Veronica, for putting up with the long hours I spent writing along with enduring my occasional need to vent. I know that she never wants to hear the term "prestige racial level" ever again. To my weekly gaming group (together since 1988) for listening to my ideas, and lastly to my feline muse, Holly, who insists that my arm makes a luxurious headrest for her to sleep on.

(Darrin Drader) - I'd like to thank my wife for her infinite patience during those times when composition must come before household duties. Thank you to my younger brothers, Kerry and Donny, for reminding me of where I came from and inspiring me to continue moving forward. Finally, thank you to all of the Oathbound fans, without whom this book would not be possible.

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Preface

Wildwood is a supplement for the *Oathbound* campaign setting published by Bastion Press. Although Wildwood is one of the Forge's seven domains, this supplement provides enough background material to run a Wildwood campaign without the core rulebook, *Oathbound: Domains of the Forge*, and any of the other campaign supplements including *Plains of Penance*, *Wrack & Ruin*, *Arena* and *Mysteries of Arena*. For GMs opting to choose this route, the subsequent chapter, **Introduction to the Forge**, provides the necessary information about the world of the Forge to effectively run a Wildwood campaign without the aforementioned products.

Wildwood is the Forge's second largest domain, a primeval world overrun by prolific vegetation and terrifying beasts. While sentient beings and the forces of civilization reign supreme in other domains, nature is the dominant power in the primordial jungle, forests and swamp of Wildwood. Feral creatures as well as its beleaguered humanoid population merely struggle to survive in a heartless world where even the fiercest predators eventually play the role of prey.

Millions of years ago, a coalition of potent deities imprisoned one of their divine enemies within the heart of a lifeless planet, forcing seven of his most wondrous and beloved creations to serve as his perpetual jailors. Sworn to remain here as part of their solemn oath, the diverse collection of beings known as the Black Flock languished in the barren world until they discovered their ability to transport all forms of living and inanimate matter onto the world of the Forge. Over the course of countless eons, they transformed the desolate landscape into the vibrant and diverse world known as the Forge.

Product Summary

This sourcebook is divided into twelve chapters plus four appendices. Game masters are encouraged to read the entire book before beginning play, while players should avoid reading chapters four through seven inclusive.

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the world of the Forge, describing all seven domains and the Feathered Fowl lording over them. This chapter also provides a brief description and racial traits for many of the races from the core rulebook as well as the supplements. This chapter is primarily intended to serve as a resource for GM's utilizing this sourcebook as a stand-alone campaign.

Chapter 2 presents a sweeping overview of Wildwood describing its terrain, inhabitants, politics and relations with its neighbors. It also provides a cursory introduction to Haiel, the overlord of Wildwood.

Chapter 3 discusses the flora, fauna and hazards encountered in each of the six varying ecosystems.

Chapter 4 highlights several of the important settlements along with a number of lesser towns and cities.

Chapter 5 details specific wilderness areas that defy the laws of nature. Commonly referred to as the Forbidden Wilderness, these tracts of land exhibit unique properties not found elsewhere in Haiel's kingdom.

Chapter 6 outlines the most powerful predators inhabiting Wildwood explaining their role within the ecosystem as well as describing their territories

and lairs.

Chapter 7 describes some of the abandoned civilizations found scattered throughout Wildwood.

Chapter 8 provides a concise overview of Wildwood's four rivers and two lakes as well as a brief discussion regarding the two oceans bordering the immense landmass.

Chapter 9 explains new mechanics to adjudicate wilderness pursuits along with a new attack form, twelve feats and a catalog of wilderness equipment.

Chapter 10 presents five new PC races and prestige racial levels, which replace the prestige races, along with a host of new arrival and earned gifts for characters dwelling within Wildwood.

Chapter 11 details the mechanics and consequences of transplanting living tissue from one being to another.

Chapter 12 is a freestanding adventure that takes characters from the northern settlement of Penumbra into the coniferous forest in search of a lost civilization and its wondrous treasure.

The Oath of the Hunt

With vines and saplings we bind thee,
In forests of green shall you be.

A ring of trees to be your cage
Forever your wanton heart shall rage.
Where cruel instinct and blood lust roam
In this realm you'll make your home.

To chase, to hunt and then to kill
All for glory and the thrill
One the predator; the other prey
Nary the hunter rues the day.

Where life and death forever duel
Only the fittest here shall rule.

Chapter 2: An Overview of Wildwood

"Be on your guard, many strange creatures and treacherous hazards lie within the impenetrable jungle. Stay close to me, and perhaps you'll live to see another day."

— Margon, a dover guide to a group of adventurers

Stretching from the remotest shores of the Central Ocean to the furthest reaches of the Northern Ocean, Wildwood's size is only eclipsed by its western neighbor, Arena. The immense domain practically bisects the Forge into two distinct halves, allowing it to share a border with every other domain with the exception of the Kiln. As its name suggests, Wildwood is predominately a feral, untamed wilderness teeming with countless species of plants and wild creatures rounded out by a significant but scattered population of sentient beings. Enormous trees and tangled masses of undergrowth cover much of the sprawling landscape interspersed with an assortment of aggressive and somewhat intelligent, carnivorous plants that lurk throughout its dense jungles and verdant forests searching for their next meal. Fearsome predators imported from a plethora of strange and alien worlds also stalk the realm's shadowy surface, endlessly hunting for prey amidst the lush greenery. Despite the omnipresence of ferocious beasts, humanoid races adapting to the rigors imposed by the natural world surrounding them thrive in this primeval realm, carving out wondrous settlements within this primitive and largely unspoiled environment. The supreme architect responsible for the creation of this primordial world mixing unbridled savagery with pristine beauty is the domain's aloof overlord, the feathered fowl Haiel.

From his island citadel off the eastern shore in the heart of the Northern Ocean, the blade of the green as he is known in some circles intently watches the inhabitants' basic struggle between life and death continuously unfold. Unlike the other members of the Feathered Flock, he possesses no ulterior motive prompting him to hone the skills and powers of his subjects in an effort to sunder the shackles of his oath. In contrast to his counterparts, Haiel greatly enjoys his role as the unquestioned master of his overgrown kingdom of unchecked greenery and terrifying monstrosities, assuming his role as the divine personification of nature; a deviation from the title that he relished during his mortal lifetime. Entrusted with the position of Defender of Nature during his tenure in the service of the bound god, Haiel views his current situation as a reward for his previous service, precipitating a fundamental change in his attitude towards the residents under his rule. Indifference supplanted advocacy, as Haiel views living creatures as nothing more than devices for his amusement in an anarchic domain where nature runs utterly amuck.

Devoid of any form of centralized government, political boundaries and aspirations are virtually non-existent within Wildwood. While a small handful of settlements exert limited control over the land adjacent to their dwellings, the concepts of sovereignty and dominion prove completely alien to the overwhelming majority of the domain's inhabitants. Instead, the forbidding landscape functions as a gigantic hunting ground populated by countless predators in a competitive search for prey. The most potent of these terrifying hunters lay claim to vast stretches of territory as their personal reserves, stealing kills and treasures from lesser beings occupying their dominions in a deliberate effort to assert their dominance, all while Haiel observes the ceaseless drama with exuberant delight.

Arrival in Wildwood

Dense webs of vines and vicious man-eating plants skulk throughout the crowded and cluttered chambers of Haiel's imposing citadel resting on the floor of an extinct volcano on the largest island of the Forge. Amidst this tangled mess of greenery, Haiel scribes distant worlds in a perpetual quest to find the mightiest creatures and pit them against a foe of his choosing as part of his grand experiment. Like a child gleefully watching rival colonies of ants wage war, the blade of the green callously observes the gritty spectacle spiral toward its inevitable conclusion as the two participants play a deadly game of cat and mouse. In some instances, the outcome is practically certain as Haiel matches a ferocious beast embodying his desired characteristics of brute strength, tenacity and cruelty against boastful explorers that rarely live up to their self-aggrandizing reputations. The winner of the mortal contest receives a gift from Wildwood's grateful overlord before he releases the victor into the wilds. On the other hand, Haiel plunders the ravaged body of the vanquished participant, adding the spoils to his hoard or putting the newly acquired treasure aside for another purpose.

Haiel generally pulls two types of creatures into his domain, the most vicious, bestial predators and sentient beings arrogantly declaring their civilization's conquest of nature. In the former case, Haiel selects creatures belonging to a wide array of species ranging from tiny, venomous vermin and carnivorous plants to gargantuan magical beasts and horrifying outsiders. Size and intelligence are not important factors in this decision, as he bases his choice primarily upon his target's hunting prowess and predatory predilection. Upon arriving in Wildwood, Haiel deposits the newcomers into an elaborate hunt and chase scenario that he intently monitors with keen interest. On rare occasions, Haiel foregoes his flying ability and personally partakes in the action, sating the primitive urges still coursing through the fiber of his being. He prefers dropping the participants into the most inhospitable regions of Wildwood, particularly the domain's dense jungle or its swampy thickets where numerous natural hazards such as quicksand and virulent contagions

ensnare their fair share of unwary visitors. The latter situation proves far more complex and insidious than the simplistic cat and mouse game that he employs against less intelligent creatures.

As part of a strange perversion of his previous role as the Defender of Nature, a base and overwhelming compulsion drives him to seek retribution against individuals and societies proclaiming supremacy over nature. Haiel readily disposes of braggadocios through the usage of savage predators that he simultaneously imports into his domain, but punishing an entire civilization poses a more challenging dilemma. In furtherance of this end, Haiel meticulously crafts an exacting replica of an entire city, placing numerous magic items and artifacts culled from fallen prey throughout the barren settlement. After completing his painstaking duplicate, Haiel pulls a substantial portion of the disoriented and startled populace into their new home. The transplanted inhabitants either reject their misguided, urban philosophy and adapt to their surrounding environment, or they stubbornly cling to their beliefs and inevitably perish at the hands of marauding predators and the swelling growth of destructive plant life. In a relatively short time, the hardy survivors abandon the trappings of civilization and adjust to the rigors of life in the untamed and frequently hostile wilderness. Decaying ruins overrun by the encroaching foliage provide ample testimony to Haiel's proclivity for dragging entire civilizations onto his grand stage to partake in this folly for his exclusive amusement. Regardless of their origins, the sudden and inexplicable arrival in Wildwood serves as a comeuppance to many.

Naturally, the preceding suppositions only apply to creatures pulled into the domain by Haiel; however they do not address travelers venturing into the feral landscape of their accord from neighboring domains. Penance accounts for the overwhelming majority of traffic crossing over the border into Wildwood via the waterborne route of the two branches of the River Tanais or through oceanic travel into the resorts along their common shoreline on the southern edge of the Northern Ocean. Immigrants hailing from other neighboring domains consist predominately of renegades seeking asylum in its remote hinterlands. For these new arrivals, safety usually proves fleeting as the unprepared, solitary dissidents succumb to the abundant monstrous denizens and treacherous hazards prevalent throughout the ominous woodlands.

The Pull to Wildwood

Unlike his fellow guardians, the blade of the green does not endeavor to fashion a successor from the seeds drawn into his world, a crucial distinction that separates him from the other members of the Black Flock. Haiel scours the farthest corners of the universe searching for creatures that pique his innate curiosity and spur his vivid imagination rather than scanning other worlds for powerful beings capable of usurping his cherished dominion over his bestial playground. Not surprisingly, he shuns pulling sentient adventurers into his domain except to punish haughty beings that

intentionally transgress the laws of the natural world. When he does make exceptions to the aforementioned guideline, he typically chooses druids, rangers and humanoid races with an inherent affinity for nature such as the dovers and elves. When his legions of avian spies spot a potential target, Haiel carefully devises an apropos scenario to test the prospective newcomer's hunting prowess and predatory inclinations by pitting it against an equally matched foe. From his relatively secure perch high above the ground, the thoroughly engrossed overlord views the unraveling drama awaiting the inevitably lethal outcome.

When he sets his sights upon a suitable mark, the physical transplantation from an alien world to Wildwood is unstoppable and takes little more than a fleeting moment. Black ravens tinged with olive green streaks swiftly envelop the intended target and instantaneously transport the bewildered creature from its homeland into Haiel's barbarous domain where he immediately subjects it to a life or death challenge. While the process is relatively simple when applied to individuals or small groups of creatures, the spontaneous migration of thousands of beings from a city into a painstakingly accurate facsimile necessitates meticulous planning that ultimately culminates in a fantastic sight rarely witnessed by mortals. An immense horde of birds resembling a voracious plague of locusts suddenly descends upon the hapless inhabitants, engulfing the befuddled humanoids in a maelstrom of swirling feathers and a deafening cacophony of piercing screeches. A few moments later, the disoriented citizens reappear within the confines of the manufactured copy of their settlement, encircled by a ring of massive trees, dense foliage and swarming packs of bloodthirsty predators.

Living creatures are not the only entities that capture Haiel's attention. Precarious natural hazards such as deceptive bogs of quicksand, virulent diseases and other hidden dangers enhance the thrill of the chase for Wildwood's voyeuristic master. He typically incorporates these concealed threats into his fabricated hunt and chase scenarios, throwing these insidious obstacles into the paths of the unsuspecting participants. In most cases, these wicked menaces linger long after the completion of a particular hunt, posing an additional impediment to adventurers exploring the domain's vast, uncharted hinterlands.

Haiel's Sifter

The items and possessions of all seeds pulled into the Forge are subject to search and confiscation at the discretion of the Feathered Fowl responsible for drawing them into their domain. The procedure lasts only a few seconds, revealing the exact functions of any magic items and artifacts belonging to the creature. Like the other members of the Black Flock, Haiel removes certain categories of mystical creations that flout his ideology from all newcomers arriving in Wildwood. Devices that detract from the exhilaration of the hunt by bestowing total concealment, such as a *ring of invisibility* or flight, such as a *carpet of flying*, immediately attract the ire of the blade of the green.



Naturally, this philosophy is not limited exclusively to the aforementioned creations, but it also applies to any item that detracts from his enjoyment of the thrill of the chase. In addition to the preceding proclivities, Hael seizes devices that destroy large swaths of plants or non-sentient inhabitants as well as metallic armor and shields. In his own way, Hael still abides by the druidic principles that guided him during his previous existence as the Defender of Nature.

Hael replaces forfeited items with creations that allow the seed to harmoniously coexist with the pervasive forces of nature. Devices that improve speed and allow creatures to move through underbrush with less difficulty supplant articles bequeathing total concealment or flight capabilities. Sturdy armor and shields constructed from organic material serve as an alternative to protective equipment forged from inorganic components. Hael substitutes items that destroy nature for those that summon natural allies to the user's aid.

Obviously the preceding categories are not all encompassing as Hael prohibits potent artifacts capable of threatening his stature as the master of Wildwood from entering into his domain. In these instances, the blade of the green sifts the item from its owner and places the individual into a virtually hopeless hunt and chase scenario against a host of wicked predators or in the most extreme cases, he takes the matter into his own hands and personally partakes in the slaughter. The aforementioned precautions generally apply to sentient beings pulled into Wildwood as the majority of vicious predators drawn into the feral domain arrive bereft of magic items.

General Observations of Wildwood

For any creature surviving its initial foray into the primitive domain, one adage best summarizes Hael's overall philosophy, "survival of the fittest". Wildwood is evolution's ultimate testing ground, where the soundest and strongest predators vie against one another in a bitter struggle to simply endure. While the bloodlords of Penance and the warlords of Arena concoct endless machinations to better their political and military fortunes, the overwhelming majority of the native population seek nothing more than to live another day without falling prey to a superior competitor. Danger lurks behind every tree and patch of scrub whether it manifests itself in the form of a mindless but fearsome beast hiding in the underbrush or as a carnivorous, sentient plant masquerading as an innocuous shrub. The search for food is a perpetual quest, and the death of one creature provides sustenance and life to another.

Despite the apparent savagery and inherent risks posed by the domain's denizens and its terrain, Wildwood is also a land of unsurpassed beauty unspoiled by humanoid intervention. An immense forest of proud and mighty trees soars high above the ground, shielding much of its floor from the intense glare of the Forge's two suns. Transparent rivers and streams of pure, fresh water gently weave a meandering course through the lush, green landscape, providing

essential nutrients to the bountiful flora and an abundant drinking supply for its fauna. Exotic creatures rarely encountered elsewhere in the universe seem practically commonplace in the primordial domain's vibrant ecosystems. Valuable natural resources frequently scarce in neighboring domains abound throughout the immense expanses of forests, swamps and jungles that comprise the greatest percentage of the green domain's landscape. Inevitably, the presence of these precious commodities attracts the interest of merchants and treasure seekers searching for instant wealth at the expense of the virgin wilderness.

Characters in Wildwood

Consistent with the flavor and texture of the Oathbound setting, players can opt to use characters imported from another campaign world or create characters indigenous to Wildwood. As discussed in the preceding sections, Hael typically refrains from pulling individual sentient humanoids into his feral fiefdom except to punish transgressors or reward noteworthy druids, rangers and other beings with a natural inclination for the wilderness; however that does not preclude preexisting characters from adventuring in Wildwood. An intact party can appear in Wildwood as a small part of an entire civilization transported into one of Hael's duplicate cities, providing the GM with a plausible plot device to transplant an entire adventuring group into Wildwood. Alternatively, native residents of the Forge can journey into the untamed wilderness from a neighboring domain such as Penance or Arena. Regardless of the methodology used, adventures in Wildwood offer a fantastic insight into an exhilarating, primeval kingdom teeming with a spectacular array of ferocious beasts and clandestine treasures awaiting their discovery.

General Features

Wildwood ranks second to Arena in terms of its actual size, although many debate the veracity of the preceding assertion. By conservative estimates, Wildwood's landmass alone including the adjacent chain of islands in the Northern Ocean encompasses an area measuring just over five million square miles. With the exception of its bodies of water and the rocky, rugged terrain bordering Eclipse, an assortment of mighty trees and prolific green plants dominate practically the entire landscape. Although the domain boasts an astounding number of plants and wild animals, its meager population of sentient humanoids in comparison to its enormity makes it the Forge's most sparsely populated domain. Humanoid visitors to the remote, primeval wilderness can travel upwards of several hundred miles before encountering another sentient being. In most areas, permanent settlements with as little as 1,000 inhabitants are few and far between, while the domain boasts only a small handful of communities that can even approach the designation of city.