

Species & Physiology

Species & Physiology — Foundational Premise

Lives in: World & Lore → Core Systems, alongside World Systems. This document states an in-universe foundational premise that was previously implicit (visible in details like Aran's "bleached fur tips," dialect-not-species as the real class marker, and the species/tier mapping in World Systems) but never directly written down. Read alongside World Systems' existing "Species and Tier — General Mapping" and "Dialect as Class Marker" sections, which this document underpins rather than replaces.

The Foundational Premise

Every named species in Sempiterni — every character, every population group, on Earth before the Magnetosphere Collapse and across all of Arbour, the Sprawl, the Badlands, the Wayfarers, and the Free Territories — is anthropomorphic. There is no baseline "human" physical form anywhere in this setting. "Human" and "humanity," as used throughout the existing documents (the ark designation, "humanity's last hope," "human-relevant timeframe"), refer to ****species-group ancestry and civilisation**** — the lineage descended from Earth, as opposed to the Penumbrans — not to a specific physical body type. Every member of that lineage is a distinct anthropomorphic animal species: wolf, fox, rabbit, and so on, in the traditional furry-setting sense — a fully formed taxonomy of distinct species, not a loose or symbolic gesture toward animal traits.

This is true of the Penumbrans as well. They are also anthropomorphic and animal-derived, just alien — a separate, ancient lineage that evolved independently in the Penumbran Reach, with their own (currently undesignated) range of species-forms, distinct from Earth-descended species but built on the same underlying logic: animal-derived, not humanoid-baseline. The Convergence/Aetheris does not distinguish between the two lineages by form — both are equally subject to it, which is consistent with and reinforces the existing ambiguity around whether the Penumbrans' fate was ascension or erasure: two independent anthropomorphic civilisations, on opposite sides of one unknowable threshold, neither privileged by their physical nature.

Mechanics

Species Carries Real Biological Variation

Species is not purely cosmetic or symbolic. Consistent with how the existing species/tier material already treats it (Aran's weathered build and bleached fur tips reading as genuine physical evidence of Badlands exposure, not just a description), species carries real, innate physical and sensory differences — the kind a reader would expect from the species in question if it existed as a real animal, translated to an anthropomorphic frame. A wolf-type character might have stronger night vision or a more sensitive sense of smell than a rabbit-type; a rabbit-type might have different stamina, hearing, or vulnerability profiles than a wolf-type. These differences are real and can matter practically — for fieldwork, combat, medical presentation, sensory description in prose — but they are not the basis of Arbour's social hierarchy.

This is an important and deliberate distinction already implied by the existing World Systems content: **species does not mark tier — dialect does**. The tier system is a social and historical artefact of the original ark manifest's wealth-and-connection-based selection process, not a biological hierarchy. A given tier contains wide species diversity (the Sprawl/Nadir has the *widest* diversity of any tier in Arbour, per existing documentation), and a Luminary resident and a Sprawl resident of the same species are common. Species-based biological variation is real-world texture, not a caste system. Conflating the two would contradict the existing, carefully established point that Arbour's stratification is about inherited wealth and institutional power, not biology.

Inheritance

Species is genetically inherited from both parents, consistent with real biological inheritance rather than a simplified "pick one parent" model:

- **Same-species parents** produce offspring of that species, as expected.
- **Mixed-species parents** — which exist, though are less common than same-species pairings — produce offspring whose species presentation is **genuinely variable** on a case-by-case basis. A mixed-species child might present closer to one parent's species, as a blend of both, or as something in between; there is no fixed formula or predictable ratio. This mirrors how real-world mixed heritage actually works rather than a tidy, game-like blending mechanic, and is true to life rather than mathematically deterministic.
- This variability is a quiet, realistic source of character texture rather than a plot mechanism in its own right: a character's species and appearance may not straightforwardly signal their parentage, family resemblance can be inconsistent or surprising, and assumptions other characters make based on appearance alone can be wrong. This is available as a tool for characterisation (for instance, a character being

mistaken for a particular lineage, or a family interaction that explains an unexpected resemblance) without requiring it to be foregrounded as a story mechanic.

- The relative rarity of mixed-species pairings is **stated as a demographic fact** here, not yet explained. Whether this is purely cultural/social inertia, something with deeper roots in Arbour's tier-and-family-line politics (echoing the Twelve's own bloodline anxieties — see Cassan Vale, Traditionalists), or simply unremarked-upon happenstance is undecided and worth a deliberate choice before it comes up in prose, since the explanation (or lack of one) will read very differently depending on which it is.
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What This Clarifies Retroactively

- **Aran's "bleached fur tips, weathered build"** (World Systems) — already consistent with this premise; this document simply makes explicit what was previously demonstrated only through example.
 - **"Species doesn't immediately mark tier in Arbour — dialect does"** (World Systems) — this document provides the underlying biological logic that makes that distinction make sense: species variation is real but orthogonal to the social hierarchy, which is purely about inherited institutional power.
 - **The original ark's selection process** (World Systems, "The Ark Selection Problem") — already describes "species that had historically dominated Earth's institutions of power, wealth, and academia" being overrepresented, with "other species" present as essential workers and service staff. This document confirms that "species" in that passage means literally distinct anthropomorphic animal species, not a euphemism or stand-in for something else.
 - **Existing character/document references to "human," "humanity," "human-relevant"** — confirmed clean. A search across all session-produced documents (Cassan Vale, Glossary, Kugelblitz Jettison Mathematics, Propulsion & Launch Logistics, Penumbran Language & Naming) found every usage already consistent with "human" meaning species-group ancestry, not a baseline physical form. No corrections needed to existing documents as a result of this clarification.
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Open Items

- [] **Penumbran species-forms** — established here as "also anthropomorphic/animal-derived, just alien," but no actual Penumbran species taxonomy exists yet. Worth developing alongside or after the Cosmology chapter's Dead Civilisation document, since their physical form likely connects to how the Installations are described physically (scale, doorways, ergonomics of surviving architecture).
- [] **Why mixed-species pairings are less common** — flagged above as an undecided demographic fact. Worth a deliberate decision (cultural, political, or simply unremarked)

before it surfaces in prose.

- [] **A reference taxonomy** — this document establishes the *rules* governing species, but not a full list of which species exist in this setting or which named characters belong to which. Confirmed so far: Wren Emberlain (sand cat), Aran Sunderwood (coyote), Cassan Vale (snow leopard — see *Cassan Vale — Full Origin and Psychology*). The full supporting cast remains unassigned.
- [] **Cross-reference into World Systems proper** — this document currently stands alone; consider whether it should eventually be merged into or tightly linked from the existing World Systems document's "Biology — Species, Class, and the Body as Text" section header (referenced in World Systems but not yet expanded into content of its own).

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