

THE MASON DIMENSION BESTIARY



Matthew Madt

Introduction

Mason's Rift National Park is the newest and most unique National Park in the entire world! In this unique world, you will find environments and wildlife unlike any you have ever seen! Whether you are planning on scheduling a future family vacation to Mason's Rift, or bought this bestiary in one of our various visitor centers during a visit, or even if you just love investigating and observing animals as much as we do, we are thrilled to see you share an interest in this amazing park!

Before we dive into the wildlife, I believe a brief background is in order. Our story begins far before the founding of Mason's Rift National Park, far before President Woodrow Wilson signed into existence the National Park Service, but as far back as nearly 4,000 years ago! At some point thousands of years prior to European colonization of the Americas, a tear in the fabric of our reality as we know it was slashed open by a force of unknown means. This all happened in a remote corner of the Appalachian Mountains. What remained was rip in our world not much larger than a set of double doors. This rip or "rift" has pulsing jagged edges and expels waves of gentle purple energy.

Not long after the spawn of this rift, various forms of earthly animals ventured into the dimension on the other side of the rift. These animals were met with a harsh environment, not suited for them. In the dimension they had wandered into, it was always night. There was no sun to be found, only the glistening moonlight barely illuminating the night sky. Despite the lack of sunlight, various forms of flora had already learned to live without photosynthesis, or at least photosynthesis in the way we understand it. You'll remember that I mentioned the moonlight just barely illuminating the night sky. Turns out, the trees and vegetation of the Mason Dimension still get energy from light, but at well over a 99% decrease in efficiency compared to earthly plants. These plants have learned to survive without sun. Due to the change of regular light levels in the Mason Dimension, the plants are red instead of green!

We know that there must be some star illuminating the solar system of the Mason Dimension, otherwise, the moon would not reflect light onto the dimension. This revelation leads scientists to believe the Mason Dimension is a tidally locked variation of the Earth, but we do not know yet for sure. Scientists are also unsure if the Mason Dimension always had its own vegetation or if its vegetation was derived from Earth's vegetation in a dimensional tear even farther back into the past than 4,000 years ago. Whatever the case, we hope you will join us in uncovering the secrets of the Mason Dimension!

Four years ago, a man by the name of Lukas Mason stumbled upon the rift leading to the dimension. After some negotiations with the United States government, the National Park Service and Lukas Mason agreed to open the rift and a six-mile radius circle inside of the dimension as a national park to the public. Thus, America's 66th National Park was born. Lukas Mason made it his life's purpose to investigate and uncover the secrets of the interdimensional world. Why could some species survive in this environment? Why are some species nowhere to be found? Why do the trees have gray bark and red foliage? All of these questions fascinated Lukas Mason and his family.

Unfortunately, Lukas Mason passed away a few months before this bestiary was published. At 53 years old, he lost a long battle with cancer. Shortly after his death, a statue in his honor was erected at the intersection of the Yinzer and Brotherly Love Trails inside the park. In my opinion, a visit to Mason's Rift National Park is incomplete until you have visited Lukas Mason's memorial.



For the Reader...

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for purchasing this bestiary. I can guarantee you will not regret investigating the wonders of the Mason Dimension. The wildlife and physical nature of this park has fascinated me since its inception. I am eternally grateful for the work of Lukas and the Mason family as well as the National Park Service for gifting the public the conservation of this amazing world. I hope my findings and recordings of some of my favorite creatures in this bestiary will pique your interest. Perhaps you will consider visiting or even returning to Mason’s Rift if you have already been!

Should you consider visiting us at Mason’s Rift National Park, I have a few recommendations and rules you will need to obey to optimize your trip. No one wants to see their crazy uncle being escorted out of a national park by law enforcement! To start off, I think you should understand the structure of the park. While the Mason Dimension stretches as far as the surface of the Earth, it is essential to remember that this park is only a six-mile circle. An iron fence has been erected to stop visitors from venturing beyond the park. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE THE FENCE. Another thing. This dimension does not have sunlight, but it does possess a cycle similar to a day and night. Around 10:00 pm to 8:00 am, natural springs in the Mason Dimension expel a potent gas that fills the entirety of the park. This gas is toxic to humans but will not kill you. Breathing in this gas will result in paralysis in a matter of seconds. It is your duty to be in and out of the park between the hours of 8:00 am and 10:00 pm.

Mason’s Rift National Park offers many trails and sights for visitors. If you enjoy hiking, consider trying our two most challenging trails that take you up mountains. The Yinzer trail runs to the west. The Brotherly Love trial runs east. Each being named after the Pennsylvanian cities in either direction. Outside of the dimension, there is space for camping overnight. Feeding and hunting Mason Dimension wildlife is strictly prohibited. None of the wildlife in this dimension is aggressive towards humans if not provoked. Although they look intimidating, remember, they are more scared of you than you are of them! Also remember to dress accordingly. The Mason Dimension is usually a comfortable 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Bring lots of water! On the next page is a table of contents. Beneath that are a few legal reminders that the National Park Service asked me to refresh readers of before they allowed the publishing of this bestiary. Happy exploring!

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Legal Reminder

Mason’s Rift National Park is not responsible for any form of injury, maiming, mutilation, starvation, dehydration, drowning, deformation, paralysis, or death. Visitors enter this park at their own risk. Tickets are not refundable under any circumstances. National Park Service season pass holders are not permitted to use their season passes to enter Mason’s Rift. Visitors may not venture beyond the metal fence surrounding the park. Visitors may not stay overnight in the Mason Dimension. Visitors may not pet, touch, feed, or hunt native animals. Violators will be fully subject to the law with a minimum fine of \$1,000,000 USD and jail time.

Horned Mouse



The horned mouse may be at the bottom of the food chain, but that doesn't mean this furry fellow is not making an effort to survive in the harsh environment of the Mason Dimension. They are the most common rodent in the explored regions of the Mason Dimension. Similar to their earthly counterparts, the horned mice are a premium target for carnivorous bats and owls. To deter the fangs and talons of this dimension's apex predators, the horned mouse uses spikes lined along their vertebrae. These horns or spikes have sharp edges and are constructed with keratin, similar to mammalian nails.

Just like earthly mice, the horned mouse is omnivorous, obtaining sustenance from both plant and animal wildlife. However, their primary and most reliable source of food is through seeds dropped by the red coniferous trees of the Mason Dimension. Species of mice adapt easily to new environments with little evolutionary change. Because of this, the woodland jumping mouse was able to fit into the Mason Dimension with minimal evolutionary changes. Their adaptation ability was in a way detrimental. Unlike other species in the Mason Dimension, the mouse did not take leaps towards thrusting itself forward on the food chain due to its comfort and remarkable ability to adapt to unique environments.

Aroma Bat



Do you smell something? Nothing smells quite as pungent as the stench emitted by the aroma bat. The aroma bat uses one of the most unique tactics in catching prey to consume its meals. You'll notice a pair of bulbs stretching out above the aroma bat's ears. The smell emitted by these fluffy black bulbs is irresistible to many insects that inhabit the Mason Dimension. Once the aroma bat has fooled insects into thinking they can gain sustenance from these tasty glands above their bat ears, the aroma bat twitches its ears, snapping its glands down in front of its mouth. This quick movement is too fast for most insects, giving little time to escape the jaws of the aroma bat.

Few beasts in the Mason Dimension are as lazy as the aroma bat. Like the Appalachian tree bat, the aroma bat has lost use of its wings over time. There's no need to fly when your food comes straight to you! Aroma bats scamper around the gravelly grounds of the Mason Dimension. They seem to be in the process of losing their eyes like their wings. Their eyes are tiny and shriveled, serving little purpose given that hunting is nearly automatic for them. The aroma bat's black coat is not always enough to conceal it from top predators. To hide, they scamper away into their homes at the roots of maroon truffle trees, the most common tree in the Mason Dimension. Unlike rabbits, the aroma bat's claws are too weak to dig into the ground, so they carve out the bases of trees!

Appalachian Tree Bat



The Appalachian tree bat is a deviant from the silver-haired bat that lost its interest in flying. In exchange for its ability to fly, the Appalachian tree bat developed powerful legs to assist in maneuverability along the maroon trees of the Mason Dimension. A bat's typical wings were left behind to allow this tree dweller the ability to make quick and erratic movements to catch prey scampering up and down the treetops. At full size, the Appalachian tree bat's torso is a little smaller than a vampire bat, but each of its limbs can reach up to a foot in length. You may notice their absence of wide ears. Their ears are rather slim and long to avoid collisions when navigating the branches of a maroon tree. To compensate for this loss, these bats have the sharpest eyes of all bat species in the Mason Dimension. Piercing yellow eyes, reminiscent of a lemur's eyes, illuminates their vision in the Mason Dimension's eternal night.

The palms of the Appalachian tree bat are complete with four fingers and a singular talon for easy impaling of prey. Despite being omnivorous, this species does not scoff at the opportunity to feast on other species that may call the trees of the Mason Dimension their home. To an outsider, it may seem the Appalachian tree bat's mission is to exterminate and feed on all squirrels of the Mason Dimension, that way they may populate the trees without competition. In reality, squirrels are just an elusive snack that can feed a family of Appalachian tree bats for numerous

days. When a squirrel isn't on the table, the Appalachian tree bat can always rely on insects and berries that intrude on their territory atop the trees. In that case, its half inch fangs would be put to waste. It is a surprise a bat could hide fangs like these in its mouth, especially when you consider their stubby face.

By no means is the Appalachian tree bat an expert in disguise, but they do make a respectable effort to hide from Apex Vampires. Appalachian tree bats are coated in a silverly fur. This color keeps them blended in against the pale bark of the maroon trees in the Mason Dimension. This color choice is also an excellent tool when sneaking up on their own prey.

Apex Vampire Bat



These guys are absolute behemoths. Top of the food chain, King of the Dimension, Darkness Enforcers, among other names. The most recognizable name, however, is the apex vampire. The apex vampire bat soars above the trees of the Mason Dimension, patrolling the night sky. Unfortunately for them, their weight keeps them from extended time in the air. The apex vampire bat is the quintessential victim of insular gigantism. While they by no means live on an island, the isolation of the Mason Dimension provides more than enough sustenance for these carnivorous bats.

Due to this gigantism, the apex vampire bat struggles to keep itself in the air. Its wings provide the ability to glide hundreds of feet from the treetops, but the strength of their wingspan cannot propel them higher into the air. The apex vampire bat is in the very early stages of the same evolutionary path as the elusive dodo bird. To compensate for this extra weight, these bats have massive, muscular legs that launch them beyond the fog layers of the Mason Dimension.

Another noticeable difference between the apex vampire bat and normal northeast US bat species is their complete absence of vision. Silence is a premium in the Mason Dimension. So much so that the apex vampire bat dropped its eyesight for legendary hearing. The apex vampire bat has the strongest hearing of any known

species on both Earth and the Mason Dimension. The apex vampire bat uses an elite form of echolocation by emitting a screech so faint, that only they can hear with their intricate ears. Without the presence of eyeballs, the intricacies of the apex vampire's hearing coil and vein through the space that used to provide them vision. As a result of these elite echolocation tactics, the apex vampire bat is little more than a giant ninja, stalking the eternal night sky.

To complement the apex vampire bat's exceptional echolocation is a jet-black coating of fur that conceals them in the night sky, only viewable via the faint reflection of moonlight. Their ten-inch wingspan complements their triangular ears that reach far beyond the top of their heads. They are far from the most aerodynamic of the bat family due to their gigantic ears, but are still more than capable of scouting for mice, squirrels, owls, and sometimes other bat species. They call the paralyzing fog springs their homes. The fog springs are an elusive spot only obtainable by few marvels of evolution in the Mason Dimension. Like most species in the Mason Dimension, the paralyzing agent in the dimension's fog cycle does not affect the apex vampire bat. In fact, the fog conceals their presence even more, making their hunts the most productive of any species.

Great Stalker Owl



The eternal struggle for the top of the food chain in the Mason Dimension rages on. The great stalker owl may seem like an underdog compared to the carnivorous apex vampire bat, but these descendants of the great horned owl are more than capable of dominating the flying omnivore niche. The great stalker owl is another recipient of insular gigantism, but to a lesser extent than the apex vampire bat. However, the great stalker owl is still far larger than the apex vampire bat. Despite this size, by no means has the great stalker owl lost any ability in flight. The adult wingspan reaches around five feet on average. An intimidating image to visitors and native species of the Mason Dimension alike.

The great stalker owl soars at heights far above any species native to the Mason Dimension. Even though the great stalker owl would make a fine snack for some of the dimension's land dwellers, its ability to reach terrifying heights makes it impossible to snare. Only the moonlight illuminates the silver and maroon feathers of this soaring predator. Even without the subtle illumination in the Mason Dimension, the great stalker owl's vision would not struggle. Unlike their vampire rivals, the Great Stalker Owl values vision over hearing. Two piercing, golden eyes encase ellipsoid black pupils. On top of this, the great stalker owl can swivel its head just like earthly owls.

This beast and marvel of the hunting scene uses sharp talons not only to grasp its prey but impale it upon reach. Meal consumption is a swift process for the great stalker owl. Once it has homed in on its prey, it stalks, staying hidden for a brief moment before sinking its talons into Mason Dimension mice or squirrels. The strength of its talons crushes the bones of its prey in a mere instant. Afterwards, their off-white, superior beak is just an insult to injury for the prey.

The great stalker owl finalizes its hunt bringing leftovers to their young. Their homes sit atop the 50-foot coniferous maroon truffle trees. They sleep far above the reach of any other beast in the Mason Dimension during the fog cycle, giving them around ten hours of sleep an earthly day.

Saber Black Bear



Don't let that menacing grimace fool you. Yes, the saber black bear is a heaping giant that has all the characteristics of earthly bears and more. However, these bears may be the clumsiest animals I have ever observed. There is an outlandish belief about how the saber black bear species became synonymous with clumsiness. Do I believe it? Sort of, but not really. Am I going to share it anyways? Of course!

You'll notice that the face of the saber black bear is not fur. Scientists do not have a concrete explanation as to how this happened or why it happened. All we know is that the surrounding area around their faces are rough to the touch, almost like a type of stone. Some folks believe that saber black bears were repeatedly hammering their heads against maroon truffle trees to knock them down. Eventually, they developed a toughness in their face to take bigger hits against the trees. Unfortunately for the saber black bear, hitting your head against solid objects repeatedly usually also leads to permanent brain damage. Now I am by no means an expert in neuroscience, I'm just saying I notice a pattern here. Some believe this theory; others think it is baloney. I'll let you decide what your head canon is here. (Pun very much intended).

The biggest highlight of the saber black bear species other than its rough head is their saber teeth. These saber fangs cut through smaller mammals in the Mason Dimension like butter. Even though small mammals usually meet very gruesome fates at the paws of the saber bear, this bear is still an omnivore. Without big canines and felines in the Mason Dimension, the saber black bear fills an entire niche of this ecosystem. Wolves and mountain lions generally struggle to evolve in the Mason Dimension even with assistance from park staff. Early big dogs and cats inhabiting the dimension died off shortly after venturing into the rift. Having no heavy competition, the saber black bear was given the liberty to test elite hunting qualities like crushing fangs in its relatively short evolution.

The saber black bear species is a true enjoyer of the maroon truffle trees. Park rangers sometimes find branches and truffle bark lying near caves. We assume the saber black bears are responsible for this. Perhaps they are attempting a very basic form of decoration at their gloomy cave homes.

Park staff enjoy the presence of the saber black bear. I can count the amount of hostile saber black bear encounters on one hand. Despite this, the National Park Service recently installed a demand prohibiting saber black bears from residing within the park's fences. Unfortunately, the saber black bear's fangs, piercing golden eyes, and shiny claws were just too intimidating for guests. If you want to see a saber black bear in person, you had better hurry to Mason's Rift National Park before the rangers shoo them all out beyond the park!

Mason Bear



The Mason bear is a relatively normal species. That is saying quite a lot for an inhabitant of the Mason Dimension. At first glance, you may not see as many clear differences between the Mason bear and a grizzly or even a black bear. However, as you step closer, you will notice how the Mason bear is half the size of the saber black bear! The Mason bear is a victim of insular dwarfism, a process that causes species to shrink on an evolutionary scale due to a lack of food.

You may say, bears are omnivores, they'll eat anything. How did these guys manage to shrink because of a lack of food? This concern is even more jaw dropping when you consider the absolute juggernaut that is the saber black bear. The answer is that the Mason bear stays very attached to the few rivers and other water sources of the Mason Dimension. At some point after bears made their way into the Mason Dimension thousands of years ago, there was a split in the lifestyle of bears. Some chose to stay close to the rivers and springs. Surprisingly, the sustenance provided by the rivers was not all that consistent. Few fish and aquatic mammals inhabit the Mason Dimension, leaving the Mason bears with little to eat around natural water sources.

The Mason bear is missing the signature saber teeth of their distant saber black bear relatives. Without these fangs, the Mason bear still picked up some desirable traits along the way. The ability to hear well in the Mason Dimension is paramount as we have seen with previous species we have discussed. To increase hearing quality, the Mason bear has enormous ears. Many species in the Mason Dimension pick either hearing or vision as their prioritized sense. This tactic often works well. The apex vampire thrives without any eyes. The great stalker owl's vision makes human vision look pathetic. Despite this trend of one or the other, the Mason bear seems to have made a compromise with bits of both great hearing and vision.

No species in the Mason Dimension considers bothering the Mason bear other than their giant sabered relatives. Even without a common threat, the Mason bear conceals itself within the foliage of the maroon truffle trees with a soft, burgundy coat along its head, back, and chest. Curiously, their legs still have a black coat of fur. Mason bears call caves their homes as well but tend to get dibs on a cave more often than saber black bears as their small size makes them a better fit in ground-level caves.

In an effort to make Mason's Rift National Park more family friendly and appealing to guests of all ages, the apex vampire bat was recently removed as the unofficial poster child of the park. Taking its place is the Mason bear. Expect to see lots of Mason's Rift merchandise featuring the Mason bear in the future! Such an ironic situation when you consider the fact that another type of bear is being removed altogether from the park.

Stalker



12/2/23

It appears my investigation of the Mason Dimension was not complete following the publication of my bestiary. I have not had the time to document my complete findings of these creatures, but my suspicions that something shady is happening here have been strengthened. Above I have added a sketch of the beast I encountered on a late stroll with fellow park enforcement. I must add that this creature was encountered during the fog cycle. My team and I took the necessary precautions to explore the park after park hours as part of maintenance request at one of the restrooms earlier in the day.

12/3/23

I did some digging in the staff only section of the visitor center on the outside of the rift. My findings confirmed my suspicions. Apparently, these beings are called "Stalkers", and they are said to be incredibly dangerous. Park rangers are instructed to deny the existence of any beings remotely similar to these. The park guests are not allowed to know about these beings under any circumstances.

12/4/23

My goal today was to explore the staff only section of the visitor center inside of the Mason Dimension. Unfortunately, park rangers and other staff keep that area on lockdown. Not even the recognition that came with the publication of my bestiary on this park was enough to swoon the rangers into letting me in. I will try to enter after hours. Since I am not an employee, I will need assistance from another suspicious worker to provide me with a suit and oxygen tank to avoid the fog after hours.

12/5/23

My findings last night were horrifying. I do not know where to begin. There is something far more sinister happening here than I ever imagined when I wrote that bestiary. Perhaps I could find an independent publisher to republish this bestiary with my findings on these "Stalkers". The public must know what is going on behind closed doors.

After digging through computer saves and files tucked into stuffed drawers, I uncovered a file on these stalkers. They are not native to this dimension as I had originally presumed. They are far worse. The stalkers are humans. They are humans left behind in the park over extended periods of time. Yes, the fog does contain a paralyzing agent that is natural to the springs of the Mason Dimension. However, the inability to kill a human being has caused some humans left behind to exhibit a basic and quick form of adaptation to the fog. The stalkers are only known of by the top 1% of management. They are called stalkers due to some instinctive nature in them to 'hide and seek' with humans. It is almost like a form of play.

As far as I knew, the park had never had a case of a visitor being left overnight since opening. My findings indicate that we could be dealing with dozens of cases of visitors being left behind. All covered up by management. Tomorrow I will begin an updated version of this bestiary containing my findings of these stalkers. Surely the park would never allow this knowledge to be widespread, so we must keep this discovery hidden for the time being.

Sources:

Adobe Firefly. <https://firefly.adobe.com/>.

- I am not exactly sure how to cite this. Here are the prompts I used for the AI generated art. I used my own image as a style template. I also used the generative fill function to customize the art to my exact liking. For example, I used generative fill to ask the AI to add spikes to the horned mouse and I used it to add bat ears and wing remains to a squirrel to create the tree bat.
- “bat on the ground”
- “black bear with saber teeth”
- “mouse side view”
- “red mountainous forest at night”
- “silver owl with red wings, wings spread”
- “small bear with big ears”
- “vampire bat in a red forest at night with big wings”
- “zombie hiding behind tree, broken jaw”

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