

# Ant-Men

*formica xenosapiens ebrios*

Description: six-limbed sapient species standing about three and a half feet tall, in a fully-upright position. The head resembles a terrestrial ant's, only facing forward. The eyes are segmented, typically blue or green in color; dietary habits typically leave an Ant-Man's eyes in a condition where the capillaries can be clearly seen.

The body likewise resembles a terrestrial ant's: Ant-men walk on two legs, have two main hands, and two supplemental hands for support and fine motor control. The carapace is typically black or dark brown, slightly warm and fuzzy to the touch, and is reasonably durable. Ant-men do have a functioning internal skeleton, and there is some suggestion that the species shares a common bacterial ancestor with humanity. Ant-men can catch Terran diseases, and vice versa: standard immunizations are recommended.

The species is technically omnivorous, but most Ant-men adopt non-rigorous vegetarianism as a lifestyle/religious choice. Their current diet typically involves heavy uses of sugar-laden drinks and strongly-flavored baked grains and

bread. Processed Terran foods have a ready market on Ant-men colony worlds.

Reproduction: Ant-men have three sexes: male (9%), female (1%), and worker (80%). Worker Ant-men can transition to a different sex via the use of specific drugs and/or hormone stimulation, but most do not bother. Female Ant-men lay eggs, which are then fertilized by the males; offspring are typically raised by worker 'family' groups (traditionally between two and four). Ant-men typically translate their own names for their primary caregivers into the Terran words 'aunt,' 'uncle,' 'abuela,' 'bibi,' or any other word with the right positive connotations. Without modern medical techniques, Ant-men live for about 75 Terran years.

Personality and Culture: typically inebriated. Ant-men are almost universal and habitual users of a particular type of lichen that, when ingested, triggers an extensive, low-grade feeling of pleasurable calmness (it merely knocks out Terrans for a few hours, which is admittedly sometimes useful, too). 'Wild' strains of the lichen are physically and psychologically addictive, but are also almost extinct at this point. The domesticated lichen strains are guaranteed to be non-addictive, and Ant-men males or females who show signs of undue psychological

dependence on it are expected to undergo gene therapy before they reproduce.

As a result, the state of the Ant-men's various cultures is somewhat dependent on the time of day. When at work, or operating heavy machinery, or of course at war, an Ant-man is generally focused on the task at hand, slightly inclined to be rude in response to interruptions, and disinclined to waste time. On their own -- starting about five minutes after opening the first can of lichen -- Ant-men are remarkably relaxed and passive. Fortunately, they're also friendly, impossible to shock or startle, incredibly difficult to aggravate, and ready to have blissfully stoned-out conversations about anything that they feel like talking about, which is usually anything that anybody else wants to talk about.

It is this quality that has smoothed Ant-man integration into the larger Galactic population, in fact. When Terran explorers first found the Ant-man planet, the species had barely made it to the 'building orbital infrastructure' stage of cultural development. Space travel is problematic for the species, given that it's an extremely bad idea to operate a launch vehicle while chomping the lichen; and it's not that smart to do in a primitive orbital facility, either. Having Terrans and other species around that could do

interesting things, like run a space station, play musical instruments, write books that weren't about lichen, and maybe run a bakery? ...Well, it seemed like a no-brainer.

Government: supposedly, the males and females run everything. In practice, the worker groups manage their own affairs, and get a male or female involved only when they're talking to another, unfamiliar, worker group. There are currently fifteen mega-groups (consisting of millions of individual worker groups) on the Ant-man homeworld; mega-groups have been known to go to war with each other, but the last war took place shortly after the current form of domesticated lichen hit the market. Indeed, that was what started the war: some traditionalist mega-groups wanted to keep the lichen 'pure.' They were eventually overruled.

Religions: discuss all Terran religions in a single paragraph. You'll run into the same problem with the Ant-men: they've got every form of religion or faith that you can think of. Some quite like Terran faiths, or other alien species' faiths. Generally, they're very calm about it -- the lichen, remember? -- but your average Ant-man is definitely a firm believer in *Something*.

Military Presence: bigger than you'd think. Ant-men have a few colony worlds at this point, there's always going to be nasty neighbors and pirates out there, and the military has been a traditional career option for Ant-men who do not themselves care for the lichen. The Ant-man Space Navy is thus a valued part of any Galactic Federation space force; in campaigns where there's no Galactic Federation, the Space Navy is both respected and respectable. Among the Ant-men, being career military does bring with a connotation of both radicalism generally, and an artistic temperament in general. Their best artists have typically had a military rank in their titles somewhere.

Role in Galactic Society: Ant-men make for excellent bureaucrats, given that they're extremely detail-oriented and utterly uninterested in anything resembling either empire-building, or blame-shifting. The idea for an Ant-man functionary is to get the person *out* of your office in a way that they don't come back. In some species the implications of that goal would be horrifying; in Ant-men, it just means that they fix the petitioner's original problem, and then get back to work. With no overtime.

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