

# Mesopotamian Marsh Slug

*deroceras plaga*

Description: a foot-long slug, mottled brown and gray. It can live anywhere there's standing water, eats anything it can scavenge, and exudes a foul-smelling slime that lingers worse than week-old skunk spray. The Mesopotamian Marsh Slug has no natural predators, except for time travelers.

Oh, this species. This species once was the bane of humanity: the Mesopotamian Marsh Slug is a filthy, disgusting, obnoxious, disease-carrying scavenger which adds absolutely no value to the ecosystem. From its origins in the Fertile Crescent it somehow managed to spread out throughout the globe, despite the best efforts of humanity to kill the damned things. The problem is that the species lays eggs that are virtually impossible to destroy except by literal fire or acid, and the marsh slugs lay a ridiculous number of them. They're an actively dangerous pest to humanity mostly because they are carriers to a whole series of nasty germs, and a now-never existed bacterium that caused people's teeth to fall out; aside from that, they're also an active blight on the landscape.

It took humanity thousands of years to figure out how to get the Mesopotamian Marsh Slug first under control, then simply extinct the species once and for all and be done with it. The entire planet took the day off to dance around the ceremonial pyres where the last slugs writhed in the flames -- with that timeline's animal-rights organizations leading the drum circles -- and the day was long celebrated. Right up to the moment where the discovery of time travel inevitably led to the imposition of an organization dedicated to controlling the use of time travel, lest the timelines be destabilized forever.

It was eventually deemed desirable by the Overseers of Time that it was not enough that the Mesopotamian Marsh Slug be destroyed once; the species must be made *to never have been*. Accomplishing **that** took many man-years of careful, nigh-obsessive planning and operations, but it was done. And yes, indeed, the net gain to both humanity and the ecosystem was noticeable. The only loss was an admittedly popular global holiday. But everybody was fine with that.

Well, almost everybody. There's always going to be some idiot out there who can't understand that, sometimes, doing things like destroying the Mesopotamian Marsh Slug

is worth interfering with the 'original' timeline. Sometimes, one of those idiots manages to jump back before the extinction event and get a breeding supply. And then they try to reintroduce the species somewhere else. They always fail, of course; the Overseers of Time have been doing this sort of thing for... a while. But there's still going to be cleanup detail. That's usually reserved for individuals or teams that have screwed up mildly in the immediate past. Sort of, ah, *negative reinforcement*.

So! Here's your slug-stabber! And your tracker for the eggs! I won't bother to say 'get them all, please.' I mean, we're the Overseers of Time. You're going to be here until you get them all anyway.

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