

The Silurus - Species background

The Bureau (The Conglomerate)

An inter-galactic conglomerate known as The Bureau runs the cosmos outside of SoSa. It's a joint-council run by six representatives from The Galaxy's most powerful (and politically connected) species, including:

- Felinux (cat people)
- Machinus (super intelligent machines)
- Tursiops (hyper-intelligent yet ever so whimsical dolphins)
- Funghids, a hive-mind of psychedelic mushroom people that travel through spores
- Plorks, shrieking tentacled-flamingo esque creatures who speak telepathically and straddle 12 dimensions.

Unfortunately, The Bureau is led by the Silurus, a nation of catfish-like humanoids, who through a steely mixture of savagery and impeccable table manners have colonised vast

swathes of the galaxy and some would say, driven The Bureau's purposes more towards profit and less towards bettering galactic life over the countless eons they've been in power.

The Bureau discovered and "manages" SoSa, and it is overseen by a Silurus aristocrat named Lord Obon Maximus the 412th of the Esteemed Dredger house.

The Silurus

The catfish-like Silurians dwell across all parts of the known galaxy, working as CEOs, small-time demagogues and dentists. As a culture, they favour hierarchy, tradition and shiny objects: may the best fish win.

Traditionally bottom feeders, they are well suited to the world of politics and middle-management. That said, they never miss a chance to pontificate on the wondrous and savage days of old.

While many live among the different worlds they've conquered, or as wealthy observers of others, all report back to their beloved **Palus**, the swampy homeworld of the Silurus, where their oldest and largest ancestors reside beneath miles of fetid green water.

Appearance, Speech and Personality

The Silurus have evolved beyond their catfish background but still retain lots of their more primordial features. They have large whiskers, useful for when dredging the bottom of the swamp and which are still revered as a sign of wisdom.

Their eyes and mouths are humanoid, and they have no nose, just a flat plane and air holes. They are completely hairless and have taken to increasingly larger ornamental wigs and moustaches to keep their mammalian cousins at ease.

Their teeth are rather sharp and there are many of them, and they have large poisonous fins - often seen peeking out of tailcoats.

Fashion-wise, they tend towards the opulent and striking, and favour a strict uniform during the most mundane of occasions: breakfast, lunch, and a particularly ornamental one for the holy art Swamp hunting.

Their skin follows a range of patterns and colours: striped, marbled and dotted, across all the colours. The back of their heads are large, allowing for their increased brain-size.

They no longer have tails - only the revered keepers of the Viteris have those - but they do have webbed hands and feet. Due to billions of years of needless gesticulation, they have developed tertiary arms. When threatened or angry, their skin will change shade, and some will squirt a wet poisonous ink-like substance.

They tend to speak in an imperious, overtly erudite manner, not dissimilar to the pompous aristocrats of earth. Despite being billions of light years ahead of humanity in technology, most of the Silurus have not developed the finer points of communication, such as sarcasm, humour and basic empathy.

They take all concepts literally, and struggle with thinking of things beyond a predator-prey dynamic. However, they are far from emotionless, and are often given to great rambling speeches, which they carry out with sadistic glee.

Completely asexual, all folks of the Silurus lay clutches of eggs, which are traditionally left at a bottom of a swamp, where they will raze local wildlife, with only the most vicious "eggings" rising to the surface. It is seen as a rather gross but necessary activity for the perpetuation of the species. As the phrase goes: "the best eggings are seen, not heard".

The richest of the Silurus hire grim-faced and bristling eel "companions" for their favourite eggs, which help improve their odds of making it out of the Birthing Swamps substantially.

Origins of the Silurus

The harsh and deadly conditions on swamp planet Palus bred a particularly hardy, and disturbingly sentient form of catfish - that grew fast feeding on the remnants of much larger fallen predators.

They grew fat on the fruit of the swamp, eventually writhing and gasping their way to the highest echelons of the food chain. However, as resources in the swamp grew scarce, the fish split into two parties: those who wanted to brave the surface, and those who wanted to grow fat on the world beneath.

Those who desired the surface split off and evolved into **The Locus**, a humanoid-fish like people who travel space in cosmic wetsuits, their blank helmets concealing their amphibian features - making them look not too different from human space travellers.

The Locus still travel across worlds, driven by an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and were

among the first to visit SoSa in its early days.

Those who stayed in the water became Silurians. As resources dried up further, only the most canny and brutal made their way to the top of the swamp.

The Silurians themselves did not gather resources, instead they discovered an illustrious pre-cosmic age technology often wielded by humans with brutish efficiency: middle-management.

They coerced the electric eels, who worked as their guard, the frogs, who were fine scouts and the newts, who ran their administration. All evolved alongside the Silurians, and joined them when it was time to clamber onto the surface.

By this stage most of the Locus had abandoned Palus, their culture steering toward nomadic, however, those that were left had through their peace-loving culture become completely undefended, and were slaughtered by the Silurus, and had their technology appropriated.

From then on, the Silurians went on to first grow the reach of their home planet, taking over nearby marsh planets, before moving onto colonising other great stretches of space.

Now, they are less conquerors so much as bureaucratic overseers, with plenty seeing the previous warlord business as a rather messy one indeed. Less likely to bludgeon their enemies to death with a bag of sticks on a swampy plain, modern day Silurus cut slick deals, host fantastic dinner parties and make scathing comments at just the right moment.

The latest Silurus fashions, social customs and investment tips can be read in "Broodsquire", the supplement for the cosmopolitan Silurian broaching new worlds, and the only literary offering of the empire to date, with most finding the entire process of reading rather a vulgar activity, up there with ambition as a distasteful pursuit.

The Veteris and folk tales

The holiest and most revered of the Silurus, The Veteris are gigantic catfish that still reside at the bottom of the swamps of planet Palus. The quickest and most savage, those who pleased the Elders the most in the grimy swamp days, went on to become attendants to the Elders - keeping their tails and growing vast in size.

But still beneath, lie their empty-eyed primordial ancestors, who must be fed regularly, lest they arise and snatch the Silurus from their posts.

It is considered an honour to visit one of the Veteris, and those who are perceived as coming from a Veteris lineage receive automatic acclaim, adoration and positions of power within Silurus society.

Among the Silurus is talk of an interstellar catfish-like beast that dredges along the bottom of the universe seeking tasty morsels. Fanatics believe The Great Fish in the Sky will come for us all in time.

Among the Silurus is an upsetting folk tale about a disfigured eel called Santus Marcks, he stalks the swamps at night, snatching hard-earned Silurus noble riches and redistributing them among the workers.

It is said that you must be ever vigilant for his arrival, and that the shinier your adornments the more likely he is to stay away, being a stalker of only the darkest places.

Conquerors no more

Much to the chagrin of the Veteris families, Silurus culture has become more varied, with science and art beginning to develop. Unfortunately, they are far behind in that regard, and do much better outsourcing their artistic achievements to other species.

Among their highest-art, is the great Swamp Hunt, where numerous Silurus nobles force their younglings (often as young as

200) to chase down a mighty Berbelak - a vast, jewelled toad that has been trained to be as vicious as possible for the occasion - on the moist shores of Palus.

Their technology was formed on what they plundered from The Locus (and throwing a lot of unhappy Newts into portals), and their religion is an ancient and dark one rooted in ritual sacrifice to hideous giant fish beneath the deeps.

The older ways are shifting, as more Silurus integrate into other worlds, but looming above is still the hierarchical and brutal culture - one hidden from The Bureau at large, but obvious to any who have been subject to Silurus rule, which still exists, couched under the terms of the "New Empire".

The ruler of SoSa

SoSa was inherited, through some tenuous hereditary connections and an awful lot of bribing by a 700 year old Silurian named Lord Obon (young by Silurian standards), who acts as its keeper in The Bureau.

He has outsourced plenty of the work to other species and factions, and sends relatives that have displeased him to live forever on its plains as punishment.

For the most part, he hopes for a stake in any resources found there, and has been fielding investment opportunities to numerous buyers there in exchange for their labour.

He sends much of his earnings home to Palus, where he hopes they will curry favor with the vast and capricious overseers of the holy Veteris. Nothing pleases the vast catfish that slumber beneath the ancient shores more than Credits, it seems. And lots of them.

He has cut numerous deals with different nations and species, using their services to track and build the planet, such as the Machina, who provide servitor bots tailored to different species, in exchange for their data-use patterns. What the Machina plan to do with all that data is another matter entirely.

Not the most open-minded of terrifying fish people, The Silurus themselves see SoSa as a bit of a joke, as concepts such as friendship are unheard of in the culture, but Lord Obon hopes to change that and his standing in the Palus, while also boosting the family coffers. He sees SoSa as a new frontier, a place in the cosmos where he can finally leave a mark.

Lord Obon is somewhat of a laughing stock in his family, and holds a lot of resentment towards them.

Ever controlling, Obon insisted they monitor new entrants with a form of quantum locking before they are free to explore all of its plains, a task which the Machina begrudgingly carry out - on their own inscrutable whims, it seems.

The quantum locking, which forms an invisible bubble around any new species, only releases when the connection is stable.

The true meaning behind the Silurus on SoSa

Lord Obon is not entirely privy to why the Silurus are there. As far as he's aware, it's an "intriguing" investment opportunity, that is rarely mentioned back home and often laughed at as an unstable experiment.

There is a reason for this.

Not long after SoSa was discovered by The Locus, Silurus newt scientists noticed that the species teleported there emanated an interesting aura.

When bottled and sent back, and as is tradition, immediately shown to the Arch Veteris, The Arch Veteris itself consumed it and through wild flapping and gulping, demanded more.

It seems that the Veteris crave whatever substance is being

produced on SoSa, and experiments have shown that it grants the giant fish beneath increased sentience and knowledge.

The beasts below have begun to speak for the first time in eons.

As such, the Veteris are working covertly to find a way to keep SoSa locked under Silurus rule, so that they can harvest the energy of connection and feed it to their old gods.