

This article contains the details for the darkenfly storm, a monstrous hazard for DCC.



The Darkenfly Storm

“The monstrous cloud rose from the swamp, a menacing shadow followed by a buzzing scream.

The lucky ones simply saw a shadow and heard its wail, as those who perceived the true form of the eldritch insects were instantly driven to panic and insanity.”

- “Conquest of the Wastelands”

by Elberforn Fitzpatrick III

Description: More a malign force of nature than a clearly defined monster, darkenfly storms are a mythical terror of the eastern reaches. It is said that they rise from the wastelands and the swamps like a tide, pulled by moons and other stellar forces, consuming life from sentient beings left under their shadow.

The origins of the darkenflies are shrouded in mystery as such things are wont to be, but scholars of the abominable necromantic arts theorize that the swarms are a natural occurrence tainted by some ancient dark power lain dormant under the badlands.

Part of why the monstrous natural force is so badly known is its unusual power of camouflage: it seems that most members of the younger races are incapable of comprehending the psychic horror emanating from the storm. These lesser minds simply see a tall shadow moving through the countryside, followed by a buzzing wail like hundreds of thousands of small serrated wings singing at once. Those with the capability to see the eldritch truth are perhaps less fortunate, for what they claim to see is a tornado of dark, palm-sized dragonflies, each staring through their soul with a malignant, steady hunger.

Ecology and environment: Darkenfly storms occur in swamps and badlands, where dark secrets are buried under the cursed soil. They rise from the swamps periodically, as if called out by some unfathomable cycle of eldritch significance. A darkenfly storm's actions seem to be driven by a simple hunger for the life force of sentient beings, although those who have witnessed their true form claim to see a hidden intelligence behind the stare of the multiferous insects forming the tornado-like cloud.

Statistics: *Init:* -5; *Atk:* leech life +8 melee (special); *AC:* 10; *HD:* 8d8; *MV:* 40' fly; *Act:* special; *SP:* undead traits, immune to mind effects, immune to non-magical weapons, half damage from non-area attacks, leech life in a 15'x15'x60' tornado-cone (1d10 stat damage, see below), terror unseen (see below); *Saves:* Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +10; *AL:* C.

- *Leech life:* Anyone caught within the tornado of buzzing darkenflies has their life force wrenched from them by the monstrous undead creatures. Anyone subject to this effect suffers 1d10 points of damage to a random attribute (roll d6 to determine which). Any creature without determined attributes suffers 2d10 HP damage instead. Dying from the effects of a darkenfly storm leaves behind a cursed husk drained of all power and life.
- *Terror unseen:* The strange necromantic energies driving the darkenflies seem to be at least partially psychic in nature, affecting the younger races (humans and halflings) unpredictably. Namely, most members of these races are incapable of perceiving the true nature of the storm, simply perceiving a huge shadow moving through the countryside and hearing the keening scream of the storm's countless wings. Those that do are often struck by the eldritch terror of the storm's true appearance, as detailed below.

Humans and halflings are susceptible to this effect (perhaps other "younger" races as well, at Judge's discretion). Roll for for each such character perceiving a darkenfly storm the first time, there is a 30% chance that they see through the veiling effect of the storm; the result determines the character's ability for future encounters as well (effects described in detail below). Elves, dwarves and other races of ancient origin (Judge's discretion) are exempt from this roll and its effects; they perceive the true nature of the swarm automatically and without additional ill effect. Note that some spells may allow character's to pierce the psychic veil of the storm without additional effects (*Detect invisible*, *Detect evil*, and so on).

- *It is looking right into me! (30%):* The character is one of the unfortunate few capable of seeing through the veiling effects of the darkenfly storm. They perceive it for what it truly is: a malign will, using countless black insects as its host, and staring into their soul through all eyes of the massive, towering swarm. Every time they encounter a darkenfly storm they must roll a DC 10 Will save: failure causes them to flee immediately, until they are safe; success allows them to remain in control of their senses. A fumble with this roll indicates that the malign intellect controlling the monstrous insects has gained a foothold within the character (further effects are left up to the Judge), while a critical success indicates that the character's resolve is bolstered, and they need not roll this save again in the future.
- *Merely a monstrous shadow (70%):* The character is fortunately incapable of seeing through the veil. All of their actions against the storm suffer a 75% chance of missing (this includes targeted spells).