

This article contains the monster details of the land nautiloid, for use in DCC or MCC. Land nautiloids can be encountered in virtual reality, in the game Cave Digger 2¹ (Steam [link](#)).



The Land Nautiloid

*“Them nautiloid things’re damn dangerous, rookie.
Good eatin’ though, if’n ye can kill one.”*

- legendary adventurer Clayton Lee Jackson III

Description: A strange offshoot of antediluvian evolution, land nautiloids are an odd adaptation of mollusc physiology, able to survive both on land and in deep sea conditions. In addition to the tentacled head and body hidden inside a spiraling, hardened shell, these scavenging predators have developed a pair of duck-like feet, allowing them to wobble along on land quite expediently. The feet also act as flippers underwater, granting the creatures a great degree of mobility and control. In addition to these unusual abilities, land nautiloids are also quite large, with most specimens ranging 4’ - 7’ in shell diameter (roughly 5’ - 8’ standing up).

The shell whorl of the land nautiloid grows larger as the creature advances in age, and is made of a hardened biological material which mixes in mineral content from the environment the creature is found in. It is said that specific minerals ingested by the creature give a land nautiloid’s shell its specific coloration, and stories abound of a cave full of vicious golden nautiloids.

1 Full disclosure: I am the game designer for Cave Digger 2, and Jussi works on the project as an artist. So go check it out already! It’s largely the reason why KitN has been on a back burner on this spring.

Another unusual feature of the creature is its maw: instead of the usual beak-like mouth found on most cephalopods, the land nautiloids shell opens up into a duck-bill shaped maw, lined with sharp, saw-toothed growths. Surrounding this deep pit are 6 flexible arms, along with 2 true tentacles located within the mouth and mostly utilized to pull prey into the orifice. Nautiloid shells are extremely tough (some even said to be impermeable due to mineral variations from the creature's diet). This combined with their prodigious regenerative capabilities and ability to re-grow lost limbs makes them true apex predators of the rare marine cave environments they are usually found in.

Ecology and environment: Land nautiloids are found in marine caverns, in underground seas and waterways, and tidal caves connecting to deeper sub-surface cave systems. They are sometimes actively hunted by those eking out an existence near such areas, since their flesh is protein rich and essentially self-preserving due to its high mineral content - although most travellers who have tasted land nautiloid remark that it certainly is an acquired taste, comparable to walrus blubber in flavour.

While land nautiloids certainly are very capable of sustaining themselves by hunting, they prefer surviving on carrion and scavenging when possible. In addition to consuming biological matter, land nautiloids are able to sustain themselves for short periods on simply consuming minerals from their surroundings.

A truly strange feature of the creature's existence, its gastric system functions on an alkaloid base rather than dissolving consumed materials in acid. It is possibly because of this feature that polished gemstones are sometimes found inside a land nautiloids gastric system: this has led to foolhardy spelunkers who look for the empty shells of dead land nautiloids, to perhaps collect the loot hidden within these abandoned husks. These brave hunters often meet a less-than-glorious end however, since it is almost impossible to tell apart a sleeping nautiloid from a dead one.

Land nautiloid: *Init:* - 3; *Atk:* tentacle grab +5 (reach, 1d4 + grab, see special) or maw + 10 (2d12, see special); *AC:* 18 / 24; *HD:* 3d12; *MV:* 20' or 40' swim; *Act:* 1d20; *SP:* reach 5' per 10 HP; Ref save vs. grab attack to avoid being held, DC equal to atk roll; maw attack against held targets on bonus 1d20 action die; increased AC when hiding inside shell, may retract if morale check fails; *Saves:* Fort +6, Ref -4, Will +0; *AL:* N.

Hiding in plain sight: It is indeed extremely difficult to tell apart an empty nautiloid shell from one with a slumbering inhabitant. Nautiloids are not necessarily constantly aggressive, although they may get territorial. Judge's would do well to pay extra attention to how adventurers approach resting nautiloids and how they behave near such creatures. Messing with the monster's shell always wakes it up in an aggressive mood.

Ingested gemstones: Every land nautiloid ingests a number of gemstones during its lifetime. When looted, adventurers are always able to collect HP x 1d10 gp worth of gems from the monster's carcass - although in the case of a recently deceased nautiloid this may require more effort than is convenient.

Shell variants: As mentioned before, some nautiloids consume so many minerals from their environment that their essential biology changes. This variation is manifest in their shell structure. Sometimes this change is enough to affect the creature's gameplay statistics as well (20% of population or Judge's discretion depending on environment). In these rare cases, use the following list as a guideline for effects (roll dX or choose appropriate variation):

Table A: Land nautiloid shell variants	
D6	Material and effect
1	Glow-ore: The creature is an irradiated mutant. Double size, HD, MV, action dice, attack bonuses and damage.
2	Adamantine: The creature's shell is entirely impervious to damage, increasing its AC by +8 when active, and making it impossible to damage it while its withdrawn.
3	Mercury: In addition to rendering the creature's flesh poisonous, AC is reduced by -6, and the ore's effects grant an additional 1d20 action die to the monster.
4	Lead: Creature's AC reduced by -4, but the extreme weight grants the creature a slam attack option (+8, DMG 1d12).
5	Iron: The monster gains a general AC bonus of +4.
6	Gold: The glittering shell is worth HP x 10 gp, if it can be obtained.