

# Goblinoids of Kyrell

*Lore Article · Culture*

## Summary

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Overview of the three goblinoid peoples of Kyrell -- goblins, hobgoblins, and bugbears -- their displacement during the Spirit Dragon Wars, their current territories, and their relationships with the other displaced peoples of the eastern regions.

## Displacement and History

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The goblinoid peoples -- goblins, hobgoblins, and bugbears -- are collectively called the **Kethric** in their own languages, a term that translates roughly as 'those who remained.' The name is a deliberate counterpoint to the historical record, which describes them primarily as a people who fled.

Before the Spirit Dragon Wars, goblinoid communities occupied territory throughout the central and eastern regions of Dracomere -- largely underground networks and surface encampments in the foothills of what would later be called the Drakepire Mountains. They were not organized on a large scale and were not a unified people in any political sense, but they were established, widely distributed, and had developed distinct cultures by region.

The Spirit Dragons, in their turn from protectors to overseers, identified goblinoid population centers as sources of 'unregulated chaos' and systematically displaced them. The wars that followed were not a single conflict but a series of increasingly one-sided campaigns in which dragons with godlike power cleared territory for reasons that made sense to the dragons and were not explained to the goblinoids. Those who survived moved east, moved underground, or moved in both directions at once.

The Halvaen of Elysor -- who had their own complicated relationship with the Spirit Dragons and a longer memory for such things -- record that the goblinoids they had previously traded with simply stopped appearing at the forest's edge. Their own records note only 'the removal of disruptive elements from the western territories' in the same period.

## Goblins

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The smallest of the three peoples, goblins in Kyrell have survived primarily through adaptability. They are found in small, mobile communities throughout the eastern plains, in the Underdark fringes, and in scattered urban pockets where they have integrated into criminal economies in the settled cities -- usually at the bottom of those economies.

Goblin governance is loose and immediate: the current most capable individual leads, and 'most capable' is determined by the group's current needs rather than any fixed measure. In lean times this tends to produce cunning, cautious leaders. In times of abundance it tends to produce whoever is loudest.

Goblins speak **Keth**, the shared root language of all three goblinoid peoples, and maintain a strong oral tradition of cleverness tales -- stories in which small, resourceful individuals outwit larger, more powerful ones. The cautionary versions of these tales, in which the clever goblin outwits someone they should not have outwitted and suffers for it, are told equally often. Goblin culture has a sophisticated relationship with the concept of knowing your limits.

## Hobgoblins

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Hobgoblins are the largest and most formally organized of the three peoples. In the period immediately following the Spirit Dragon Wars, they were the primary force holding goblinoid

communities together during the displacement. The traditions of discipline and hierarchy that characterize hobgoblin culture were not pre-existing features of their society -- they developed in response to existential threat and proved functional enough to keep.

Hobgoblin communities in the current age are concentrated in the eastern territories, where they maintain semi-permanent encampments organized along military lines. They are not at war with anyone in particular -- they are, by general culture, prepared for a war that may or may not come. This preparedness has made them valuable as mercenary forces and uncomfortable as neighbors. Their relationship with orcs is respectful and occasionally tense. Both peoples were displaced by the same force. Both developed martial cultures in response. Neither has acknowledged any formal alliance, but there is a shared understanding between hobgoblin war-leaders and orc War Chiefs that predates any written compact and functions more reliably than most formal treaties.

## **Bugbears**

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Bugbears are the rarest of the three peoples and the least organized. They are larger than hobgoblins, powerful enough to be individually dangerous to most threats, and by general inclination solitary. Bugbear communities exist but are less communities than loose affiliations of individuals who have found it convenient to be in proximity to others like themselves.

Bugbears in Kyrell occupy a specific ecological and cultural niche: they are the primary hunters of the deep Drakepire foothills and the cave systems immediately adjacent to the Underdark. They know these territories better than anyone, including the Blue Knights, who control the pass but have never mapped the surrounding terrain with any rigor. Bugbears have never seen fit to correct this.

They speak Keth but also maintain a non-verbal communication system of markings and physical signals that other goblinoid peoples can read but do not fully understand. Bugbear scholars -- a category that exists and is more common than outsiders assume -- maintain records in a pictographic script that has no connection to any other writing system in Kyrell.

## **The Kethric and the High Elves**

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The Halvaen of Elysor describe goblinoids as 'particular enemies' in their oldest public texts. This description is two thousand years out of date and has not been updated. The actual history is more complicated: what made goblinoids 'particular enemies' of the High Elves was a specific period of territorial conflict during the Spirit Dragon Wars when displaced goblinoid populations, under pressure from the dragons, pushed into the western forest margins that Elysor considered its buffer zone. The conflict was real. It has been over for a long time. Neither party has formally acknowledged this, which is typical of how both parties handle history.