

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

Under the Sea

Ben Bleiweiss
 Uncommon Knowledge
 Wednesday, February 6, 2002



I'm feeling blue. I'm all washed up. The tide is turning, so don't even think about selling me down the river just yet, or you'll end up all wet.

Had enough cliché yet? It might be fishy, but unless you're a fish out of water, you'll have to go fish for relief elsewhere.

Welcome to blue race week here at Uncommon Knowledge. As you may recall, I took a good long look at black during week three. Over the next coming weeks, I plan on exploring different elements of each color one by one, and what better time to begin than with blue during Cephalid Week?

So, since no man is an island, let's take a (sea) cruise through Atlantis and see what we can find.

THE THALAKOS

Introduced as part of the *Tempest* storyline, the Thalakos are shadow creatures trapped in the plane of Rath. Although they weren't a 'summoned' race (they are Soldiers, Townsfolk, Wizards, and Illusions), they definitely had their own subset across the entire *Tempest* block. They seemed like a very sneaky bunch, always having tricks up their wet little sleeves, give or take the Thalakos Sentry, who stood as a guardian against other small (read: one toughness) shadowy invaders.

For instance, the **Thalakos Seer** allowed you to draw cards every time he left play. You could imagine this as if when he died, he would leave behind little scrolls of knowledge that you, as a wizard, could read for further knowledge. Or, should you **Capsize** him, he'd report back to your hand, with new magic (draw a card!).

The **Thalakos Deceiver** and **Thalakos Dreamsover** both used their powers of subterfuge almost like spies. The Deceiver would recruit enemies to your team, while the Dreamsover kept an enemy occupied so it could not attack you.

The **Thalakos Mistfolk** and **Thalakos Scout** were the warriors of the bunch, able to continue fighting with guerrilla tactics (no, not the card!). They'd strike at their enemies from the shadows, then disappear as quickly as they came (shown by returning to the top of your deck or to your hand, respectively).

Lastly, the **Thalakos Drifters** might be the most interesting, walking the line between the solid and the ethereal. Able to move in and out of phase (not phasing!) with Rath, they could step between the worlds in order to do battle with those who had shadow, as well as those who did not.



THE HOMARIDS



Fallen Empires saw merfolk at war with the homarids. These lobster-like beasts from the depths formed their own communities, with a definite hierarchy established. Although homarids only spanned two sets (*Fallen Empires* and *Alliances*), they debuted something very important to **Magic**: the untargetable creature.

Sure, the **Homarid** itself may have grown or shrunk depending on the height of the tide. The **Homarid Shaman** had a definite grudge against those pesky elves and thallids. But the **Homarid Warrior** and his amazingly large crustacean friend **Deep Spawn** (also a homarid!) were the first two creatures in **Magic** to have built-in untargetability. Even though it came at a slight drawback, it was revolutionary at the time. Plus **Deep Spawn** is just a really large trampler, anyhow.

My personal favorite homarid came in *Alliances*. It was the **Viscerid Drone**, capable of killing anything that stood in his path. (The naming team felt that Homarids were unpopular enough to warrant a name-change in *Alliances*, hence "Viscerid." Their reasoning? "They evolved.") I

WHAT IS MAGIC?
 CLICK HERE!

GLEEMAX
 FIND OUT MORE!

Wizards OF THE COAST
 Dream Jobs Open Now

ASK THE PRO

PRODUCTS
 Torun
 TENTH EDITION
 All Magic products

RULES
 RULES

MESSAGE BOARDS
 Magic General Forum
 magicthegathering.com Forum


MAGIC ONLINE
 MAGIC The Gathering ONLINE
 Download Now!
 Magic Online III Launch Info

Lord of Atlantis/Vodalian War Machine/Seahunter: A triumvirate of non-mermen that all interact directly with merfolk. The Lord pumps them up, the Seahunter catches them, and then they all go for a ride in the War Machine.

Rootwater Thief: Mike Long's Invitational card (he got to design this Merfolk after winning the Duelist Invitational in Barcelona).

Of course, dozens of other merfolk have seen play in every format imaginable (raise your hands if you are old enough to remember **Merfolk Assassin/War Barge** decks taking Type 1 by storm?), and will continue to be well-loved in the hearts of **Magic** players across the world for years to come.

THE CEPHALIDS

These squid-like creatures populate Otaria; their society seems based upon diplomacy, skullduggery, and trade. **Aboshan, Cephalid Emperor** used to rule over the race, but then he died. His successor married him only for the power it brought. She is **Llawan, Cephalid Empress**, current ruler of the lands beneath the waves (at least, at the start of the storyline for *Torment*. I don't honestly know if she lives through the novel.) 

Just look at how efficiently mercantile the cephalids are as a race:

The **Cephalid Scout** scours the land looking for treasure.
 The **Cephalid Looter** takes the haul brought by the Scout, and sifts through it for booty.
 The **Cephalid Broker** takes the goods, and trades it off for even more valuable merchandise.

Pretty nifty, eh? *Torment* introduced the intellectual cephalids, including the **Cephalid Sage** (who does some pretty fine research, but takes time to find what he's looking for), the **Cephalid Aristocrat** (all that money has to go to somebody!), and the **Cephalid Vandal** (who gets rid of unwanted items and knowledge).

Then, of course, there are the lines of defense for the cephalid realms. The **Cephalid Retainer** uses his powers to keep invaders at bay, while the **Cephalid Illusionist** simply uses subterfuge magic to protect. Lastly, the **Cephalid Snitch** is a fine spy, capable of backstabbing allies at a moment's notice.

Well, we've come to the end of the underwater edition of Uncommon Knowledge for this week, but before you go, I'd like to pose to you, the reader, a couple of questions:

1) (Overheard at the **Magic** Trivia show at Pro Tour - San Diego): If **Ambassador Laquatus** is the only merfolk in Otaria, what does he do for women?

2) What exactly DOES go on in that **Cephalid Shrine**?

Next Week: You wouldn't like me when I'm angry!

Expansion	Merfolk	Homarids	Thalakos	Cephalids
<i>Alpha</i>	Lord of Atlantis*, Merfolk of the Pearl Trident	-	-	-
<i>The Dark</i>	Merfolk Assassin	-	-	-
<i>Fallen Empires</i>	River Merfolk, Seasinger, Svyelunite Priest, Vodalian Knights, Vodalian Mage, Vodalian Soldiers, Vodalian War Machine*	Deep Spawn, Homarid, Homarid Shaman, Homarid Spawning Bed*, Homarid Warrior	-	-
<i>Alliances</i>	Benthic Explorers	Viscerid Armor*, Viscerid Drone	-	-
<i>Mirage</i>	Coral Fighters, Merfolk Raiders, Merfolk Seer, Sea Scryer	-	-	-
<i>Weatherlight</i>	Merfolk Traders, Vodalian Illusionist	-	-	-
<i>Tempest</i>	Manta Riders, Rootwater Diver, Rootwater Hunter, Rootwater Matriarch, Rootwater Shaman	-	Thalakos Dreamsower, Thalakos Lowlands*, Thalakos Mistfolk, Thalakos Seer, Thalakos Sentry	-
<i>Stronghold</i>	Tidal Warrior	-	Thalakos Deceiver	-
<i>Exodus</i>	Merfolk Looter, Rootwater Mystic	-	Thalakos Drifters, Thalakos Scout	-
<i>Urza's Saga</i>	Coral Merfolk, Sandbar Merfolk	-	-	-
<i>Mercadian Masques</i>	Blockade Runner, Darting Merfolk, Saprazzan Bailiff, Saprazzan Heir, Saprazzan Raider	-	-	-
<i>Nemesis</i>	Jolting Merfolk, Rootwater Commando, Rootwater Thief, Seahunter*	-	-	-
<i>Invasion</i>	Galina's Knight, Shoreline Raider, Vodalian Merchant, Vodalian Zombie	-	-	-
<i>Planeshift</i>	Arctic Merfolk	-	-	-
<i>Apocalypse</i>	Gaea's Skyfolk, Razorfin Hunter, Reef Shaman, Tidal Courier, Vodalian Mystic, Whirlpool Rider, Whirlpool Warrior	-	-	-
<i>Odyssey</i>	-	-	-	Aboshan, Cephalid Emperor;

Cephalid Broker; Cephalid Looter;
Cephalid Retainer; Cephalid
Scout; Cephalid Shrine*

Torment	Ambassador Laquatus	-	-	Cephalid Aristocrat; Cephalid Illusionist; Cephalid Sage; Cephalid Snitch; Cephalid Vandal; Llawan, Cephalid Empress
---------	---------------------	---	---	--

Ben may be reached at uncommonknowledge@wizards.com.

Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Ben Bleiweiss](#) archive

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

