

# Join together in the "bands with other" Absurd or Ridiculous? You Decide

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Hi, everyone in ether-land. I'm a **Magic** editor here at Wizards of the Coast, which means my job involves card wordings. Abilities, flavor text, and names; packaging, inserts, and rules updates -- anything with words gets a nice fresh scrubbing by the editing department before being foisted onto the public. Speaking of which, I'd like to enlighten you about the "bands with other" ability... possibly the worst keyworded ability of all time.

Okay, that was a non sequitur. Our website editor, the esteemed Mr. Forsythe, overheard me loudly complaining about how this ability doesn't make much sense, so he roped me into writing this article. (We've all been getting a lot more careful about what we say when he's around lately...)

If you checked out Monday's [Magic Arcana](#), you saw the booster insert that outlined this ability. It's pretty dense, though, so I'll guide you through it.

In order to understand "bands with other," you first need to understand "banding," a defunct ability that graced every set from *Alpha* through *Weatherlight*, with the exception of *Visions*. Appearing mostly on white and artifact cards, banding was a powerful -- yet confusing -- ability. It was powerful because it changed the fundamental rules of combat; it was confusing because, yes, it changed the fundamental rules of combat.



The short explanation of banding is that if your creatures attack or block in a band, the controller of any creatures that deal combat damage to them doesn't get to assign that damage -- you do. Pretty cool. Everything else about banding, though, elicits a "huh?" It works differently when attacking and defending. (In an attacking band of X creatures, at least [X-1] of them must have banding. In a defending band, only one creature must have banding.) A lone blocker could block multiple creatures if they were banded together. If an attacker with evasion (flying, swampwalk, whatever) is banded to a creature without evasion, the whole band can be blocked. Then it gets really complex: What if the only defensive

*Complicating the complicated: banding probably didn't need a new twist*

creature with banding is destroyed before damage is dealt? What if my band of three attacking creatures, one of which has trample, is blocked by your band of three defending creatures, one of which has first strike?

The only answer I can give you is, "I dunno." But why waste our time on a somewhat-comprehensible ability that appeared on over 30 cards? Let's get *really* obscure. "Bands with other" is a narrower variation of banding that appeared only in the *Legends* set. Because if there's anything banding needed, it was more technicalities.

The phrase "bands with other" didn't just stand alone; it was always followed by a creature type as in "bands with other Legends" or "bands with other Goblins." (I know some of you just jumped out of your seats. Hold your horses; we'll get to that later.) A creature with "bands with other Legends" could form an attacking band with any creatures that also had "bands with other Legends" or just had regular banding; a creature with "bands with other Goblins" couldn't be in that band. In a change from the regular banding rules, a non-banding creature couldn't join that band either -- normally one of the uncool kids could be invited into the clique. On defense, multiple creatures with the same "bands with other" ability could hold hands, but (again, unlike regular banding) no creatures without this ability could join in. Take a moment now. Did you notice what seems to be missing? Think about it: What should a creature with "bands with other Legends" be able to band with? But no. It can't. Unfurrow that brow and stop shaking your head. It's true:

A creature with "bands with other Legends" CAN'T BAND WITH A LEGEND.

It can band with a **Benalish Hero**. It can even band with a Goblin that has "bands with other Legends." (Though, to be fair, this was not only impossible at the time of *Legends*, it was inconceivable. Not until the *Mercadian Masques* card **Conspiracy** came out over five years later was this ludicrous situation possible to set up.) It can't band with **Axelrod Gunnarson** or **Halfdane**. Sigh.



*In the shadow of the dreaded Unholy Citadel, Lady Orca, Veldrane, and the Skeleton Ship hatched their sinister plan...*

Fine, fine. That may be dumb, but it just means that the ability is named poorly. It doesn't mean it's a bad ability... even though it's a strictly substandard version of an existing ability. In fact (I feverishly reasoned as I was first discovering its existence), "bands with other" is pretty cool. It's got a good flavor to it. The different factions have huddled amongst their own kind in this time of epic war, and the only ones they trust enough to share battle with are their own kindred, as well as those skilled at cooperative fighting (for the metaphor-impaired, that's creatures with normal banding). Since banding was so powerful, this fragmentation was a clever way to broaden the ability. Banding would be more widespread, but most creatures who could band would only be able to do so with a small cluster of compadres. When building decks, I had my "bands with other Goblins" warren, my "bands with other Elves" collective, my... oh, right. Those don't actually exist. There aren't lots of different "bands with other" abilities. There aren't a bunch. There aren't even a handful. THERE ARE TWO.

Only two.



Cut one of them and the ability wouldn't even need the wonky naming convention it was saddled with.


What are the two? "Bands with other Legends." And "bands with other Wolves of the Hunt."

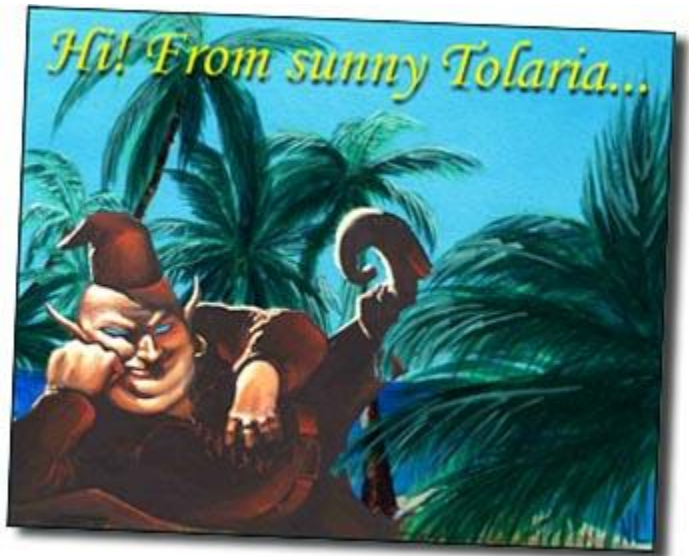
Not even "bands with other Wolves." Nope. "Bands with other Wolves of the Hunt." This has been Oracle-ized into "bands with other Wolves-of-the-Hunt" for token-naming reasons I won't get into here. So all right, no clan unity. But "bands with other Legends" is still cool, especially considering that there are fifty-five Legends in *Legends*. As long as a good number of them can stand tall with their comrades-in-arms and march triumphantly into battle, confident in their near-indestructibility, all the confusion is worth it. And that's precisely why the number of creatures with "bands with other" is so astounding. Go, on take a guess. How many creatures have it?

Any idea?

Give up?

The answer, of course, is ZERO. NADA. GOOSE EGG. Not a single creature was printed with this ability. So how did they get it? There was a cycle of five uncommon lands in *Legends*, each of which had a static ability that gave all Legends of a certain color "bands with other Legends." Of course, to prevent any of these lands from being the least bit playable, they didn't produce mana. What about Wolves of the Hunt? Master of the Hunt, a rare  2/2 creature, could produce 1/1 Wolves of the Hunt tokens with -- that's right -- "bands with other Wolves of the Hunt" for another  apiece. After 12 mana, you'd actually have two 1/1 Wolves that could band with each other! And no, they cannot band with the Master himself!

But that's not the end. Oh, no. Since the six whole cards that could bestow "bands with other" on creatures were clearly too powerful, there were actually "bands with other" hosers! The Legendary land **Tolaria** could tap to remove banding or "bands with other" from a creature for a turn. (Naturally, **Tolaria** DID tap for mana.) But **Tolaria** could only remove the ability *during a player's upkeep*, meaning you could never pull off the dreaded remove-"bands-with-other"-in-the-middle-of-combat trick with it. Luckily, **Shelkin Brownie** was printed. A common  1/1, **Shelkin Brownie**'s sole ability was to remove "bands with other" from a creature for a turn. Whew -- that almost got out of hand. Thanks, **Shelkin Brownie**! Oh, well. If only **Shelkin Brownie** could remove "bands with other" from the rulebook.



*The Shelkin Brownie chills on Tolaria, safe from the fearsome "bands with other" mechanic.*

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Comments? Email [editor@wizards.com](mailto:editor@wizards.com). I reserve the right to not answer any "bands with other" rules questions, however.