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Fledgling Dragon Takes Flight

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with [Shivan Dragon](#), and the adorable [Dragon Whelp](#).

Enter the [Fledgling Dragon](#). This tight little package combines the two aforementioned creatures, into one fearsome individual. I hate to make a **Pokémon** comparison, but this is one of the first creatures that really feels like it undergoes a thematic evolution between pre- and post-threshold states. The before picture is a decently costed 2/2 flyer (for red). The after effect is papa Shivan, ready to take to the skies with a vengeance.

The [Fledgling Dragon](#) joins a long lineage of wyrms in **Magic** history. Although every color contains at least one dragon, red maintains a complete stranglehold over the firebreathing ones. These are expressed through one of two abilities: being able to pump their front end (such as with the card [Firebreathing](#)), or being able to deal damage to creatures (like a mega-Prodigal [Sorcerer](#)). Let's see who we have in each classification of lizard:

- Firebreathers:** [Shivan Dragon](#), [Dragon Whelp](#), [Vaevictis Asmadi](#), [Nalathni Dragon](#), [Viashivan Dragon](#), [Lightning Dragon](#), [Two-Headed Dragon](#).
Famethrowers: [Crimson Hellkite](#), [Shivan Hellkite](#), [Vampiric Dragon](#).

How do we separate these from other creatures in **Magic**?

DRAGONS FLY

Although they don't necessarily have wings in every mythology, the dragons of **Magic** all share the ability to fly. From the air they spew forth their fiery death, raining destruction and holocaust upon all those below them. There have been a scant two dragons which didn't naturally fly in **Magic**, but both [Mist Dragon](#) and [Canopy Dragon](#) contained abilities which allowed them to take to the air on their own power.

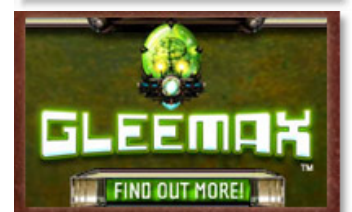
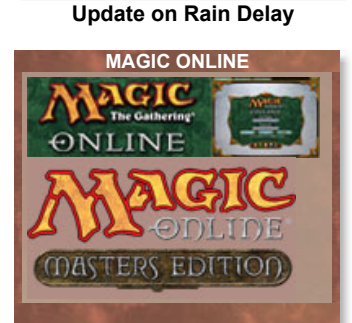


DRAGONS ARE LARGE

Or they become large. [Nalathni Dragon](#) might only be a 1/1 bander (and the only naturally banding red creature), but it can pump its power as far as you have red mana. Way back in the day, R&D started making rules about what each color should get. It was decided that red and green would both receive either really horrible flyers, or really huge flyers (Dragons), with no middle ground for cards like [Roc of Kher Ridges](#) or [Granite Gargoyle](#). That's why you have cards like [Kyscu Drake](#) (an in-joke about how drakes are supposed to be "s-u-c-K-y" compared to dragons) and [Fire Drake](#), both of which are very underpowered compared to the humungous fully-grown dragons.

DRAGONS ARE DRAGONS

This might be obvious, but all firebreathing and flamethrowing dragons are creature type "dragon." While this might be mostly an aesthetic observation (aside from theme decks and creature type hosers), it's important to remember that a large part of this game we love comes from the fantasy feel. [Firefly](#) isn't a dragon. [Vampire Bats](#) aren't a dragon. [Mawcor](#) isn't a dragon. [Vaevictus Asmadi](#), now there's a dragon!





THE LITTLEST DRAGON THAT COULD

So with **Shivan Dragon** readily available in *7th Edition*, why would you want to play with a version that doesn't even reach it's full potential until late into the game?

1. **Shivan Dragon** costs six while **Fledgling Dragon** costs four. This means you can drop the smaller dragon a full two turns earlier, and start beating with it from the get-go. That's at least 4 more damage dealt, barring any sort of extra mana-ramping. And what's more, let's say that you get to threshold on turn 6. That means you have a full range of red mana to already pump into the **Fledgling**, since he's already in play. **Shivan Dragon** will deal 12 damage in a mono-red deck on turn seven. **Fledgling Dragon** will optimally be able to deal 16, assuming you hit threshold on the seventh turn.
2. **Fledgling Dragon** has a trick to it, while **Shivan** doesn't. What I mean is this: When you play **Shivan**, he's always going to be a 5/5 firebreather. **Fledgling Dragon** might come into play as a 2/2, but let's say you have 5 cards in your graveyard. Does your opponent throw a **Shock** at your wyrm, hoping that you can't put two cards in your graveyard? You can play great mind games psyching out your adversary in this way.
3. Threshold is much more easily attainable for red in *Judgment*, and that's all I'm going to say about that.

I'm not the deck building guy for this site -- that'd be Jay (or Anthony for group), but I couldn't help but notice that this guy works really well in a red/blue deck. While many blue/green decks were adding white for **Mystic Enforcer** as the kill card, I believe that taking out both the white and the green (Alas! *Anti-Judgment* theme deck here!) might make a neat little number like this:

The Incredible Growing Dragon!		
by Ben Bleiweiss		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Barbarian Ring	3 Aether Burst	1 Aether Burst
1 Cephalid Coliseum	3 Counterspell	1 Exculde
9 Island	2 Burning Wish	1 Fact or Fiction
6 Mountain	2 Cunning Wish	4 Flametongue Kavu
4 Shivan Reef	3 Fact or Fiction	2 Gainsay
24 lands	3 Obsessive Search	2 Hibernation
	4 Peek	1 Repulse
4 Aquamoeba	4 Standstill	1 Upheaval
1 Cephalid Sage	3 Upheaval	2 Urza's Rage
4 Fledgling Dragon	27 other spells	15 sideboard cards
9 creatures		

Basically, this deck runs a lot of one- and two-mana spells that will fill the graveyard quickly. **Aquamoeba** serves as an early defender that works well with madness cards (and discarding in general). One of each of the key spells go into the sideboard so they can be tutored for at will (I love the Wishes!), and the deck basically wants to do one of two things:

Drop an early **Fledgling Dragon** after reaching threshold with cantrips, or drop a **Dragon** after an **Upheaval**, which will surely fill up the graveyard after you discard at the end of your turn.

Either way, your opponent is dealing with a 5/5 firebreather which can easily fit into both of the above strategies. Ever think about dropping a **Shivan** after an **Upheaval**? Twelve mana stretches way past the limits, while 10 mana means you have 9 mana pre-**Upheaval**, plus one extra when you lay a land back down. That's a lot more manageable. Mike Flores gives his thoughts on **Fledgling Dragon** [here](#) if you're interested.

As a parting comment, I want to say that I'm very impressed with the design of *Judgment* as a whole. Over the past three weeks you've seen me take a look at the **Wishes**, at the **Punisher mechanic** and at this threshold dragon. *Judgment* will change the way most constructed formats are played, with a huge supply of strategy-altering cards, and I've been privileged to discuss three of the best. Thank you for reading, and tune in next week when I talk about lands, man.

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.



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