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An Army of Squirrels

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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

You all can at least partially blame me for Squirrel Week. When Mark and Aaron asked me to submit an audition piece for this column, I was allowed to choose any deckbuilding topic using *Odyssey*, the newest set at the time. I chose--you guessed it--Squirrels, and ever since the two of them have plotted Squirrel Week. It would have happened eventually anyway, because Mark is the one sneaking Squirrels into **Magic** (something I didn't know when I wrote my audition . . . go Lady Luck!), but I kind of egged him on.

The fact that I picked Squirrels shouldn't surprise you if you have read my previous articles. I love themes, and *Odyssey* brought with it enough Squirrels to make a theme deck featuring two of my all-time favorite **Magic** cards: **Deranged Hermit** and **Squirrel Wrangler**.

Today's article is not a theme article, per se. Instead, I am going to discuss the making of a "normal" Squirrel deck. That is, if you want to dazzle your opponent with Squirrels because it's funny, because you're weird, or just because you're looking for a change of pace, then today is your day.

I focus on Standard because I want newer players to ponder the wonders of Squirrel decks. If you play with pre-*Invasion* cards, the ideas here should still be relevant. Besides, the next two weeks I'll be focusing on older sets (oooh . . . foreshadowing).

Squirrels: The Essentials

Any self-respecting Squirrel deck obviously starts with Squirrel cards. Almost all of my own deck creations include four copies of 1) **Chatter of the Squirrel**, because it's cheap and fast; 2) **Squirrel Nest**, the most reliable way to make loads of Squirrels; and 3) **Squirrel Mob**, the king of Squirrels.

I also use at least two copies of **Acorn Harvest**, because it acts as a super Chatter later in the game (preferably after **Squirrel Mob** is on the table). Whether I climb to three or four copies depends on the deck.

After that, my choices vary widely. **Druid's Call** and **Nantuko Shrine** can combine with other tricks to produce ridiculous amounts of Squirrels. I won't discuss or use **Nantuko Shrine** today simply because I have [featured it before](#), but many Squirrel decks can be built on the shoulders of the Shrine alone.

Krosan Beast is terrific if you can reasonably expect to reach threshold. The problem is that it works at cross-purposes with the flashbacking **Chatter of the Squirrel** and **Acorn Harvest**, so you have to work to keep your graveyard full.

Similarly, **Nut Collector** is insane when you have threshold. I often throw in a single copy despite its 5 cost, because 1) I think every creature type deserves a "lord," and 2) it's named **Nut Collector**, which is funny.

If you happen to be building a strict theme deck, you will probably want to dip into almost all of these cards, as well as **Might of Oaks** (the *Urza's Legacy* version), **Monstrous Growth** (the *Portal Second Age* version), and the *amazing* Squirrel cards before *Odyssey*. **Might of Oaks** sometimes sneaks into my nontheme Squirrel decks, too.

Although Squirrels make up the core of any Squirrel deck, the Standard versions need help in order to impress your friends. Below are ideas for support cards and the different ways you can take a Squirrel deck.

Squirrels: Their Forest Home

If you have a pack of Squirrels sitting in sleeves and are wondering what other goodies that green--the color of Squirrels--might provide your deck, there are plenty of options. Think first about utility spells like **Creeping Mold**, **Nullmage Advocate**, and **Druid Lyrst**, because Squirrels by themselves can do nothing to stop opposing artifacts or enchantments. They also pretty much suck at protecting themselves, which may warrant **Spellbane Centaur** or **Sylvan Safekeeper**. If you are worried about opposing fliers, try a spell like **Hurricane**. Finally, if your friends play **Pernicious Deed**, slap four copies of **Bind** into your deck, because Squirrels *hate* **Pernicious Deed**.



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The fun starts once basic utility is out of the way. **Parallel Evolution** can usually double your Squirrel count. When you scratch your head and think "How the heck am I going to win with *Squirrels?!?*", think **Overrun**, **Centaur Chieftain**, or even **Lure**.

You can also build a deck whose main goal is to make a lot of Squirrels . . . period. In this case, **Epic Struggle** is your win condition, and cards like **Folk Medicine** and **Symbiotic Deployment** help you get there.

In addition, if your Squirrel deck is monogreen there's no reason to avoid artifacts. **Coat of Arms** can make mighty big Squirrels, while **Mirari** can add bunches of Squirrel-creating spells to the stack. I can also envision a Squirrel deck that uses some combination of **Grafted Skullcap**, **Ensnaring Bridge**, and **Meekstone** to throw a barrage of expendable Squirrel troops at an opponent while keeping you safe from harm.

Squirrels: The Other White Meat

Of course, green's allied colors--white and red--can spruce up a Squirrel deck significantly. In white, the most obvious additions are **Glorious Anthem**; **Glory**; **Mirari's Wake**; and **Pianna**, **Nomad Captain**, all of which can make a Squirrel army look like a real army. I also like **Eladamri's Call**, which can fetch **Squirrel Mob**, or single copies of **Nut Collector** and **Krosan Beast**.

A green-white deck can also use Squirrels to grind the game to a halt. **Blessed Orator**, **Lashknife Barrier**, **Diversionsary Tactics**, and **Worship** combine with Squirrels to stall most opposing creature-based strategies so that you can set up something tricky later in the game (something involving **Phyrexian Altar** or **Test of Endurance**, perhaps?).

My favorite Squirrel enhancers in white, however, are 1) **Equal Treatment**, which not only acts as defense but also can double the damage of an assaulting Squirrel attack, and 2) **March of Souls**, which neuters more impressive opposing creatures while actually *improving* your own little dudes by giving them flying.

Red's single-best addition to Squirrels are burn spells like **Firebolt**, which give your deck a way to remove blockers and deal those last points of damage. **Rites of Initiation** can also be particularly scary in a Squirrel deck. My favorite Squirrel trick in red is **Book Burning**, which solves that pesky threshold problem.

Squirrels: Embracing the Dark Side

Green's opposing colors--black and blue--provide similarly wacky fun. The best reason to include black in a Squirrel deck is for discard or creature removal as a supporting strategy. **Braids**, **Cabal Minion** happens to love hanging out with **Squirrel Nest**, and **Last Laugh** provides the same chain reaction craziness that I discussed during [Token Week](#) and the [Deck Challenge I](#).

Squirrels happen to be expendable, and black is excellent at making use of expendable critters. **Quagmire Druid** solves opposing enchantments, while spells like **Dredge** and **Diabolic Intent** can make good use of extraneous Squirrels. I am particularly fond of **Reprocess** for turning large numbers of Squirrels into large numbers of cards.

As with almost any strategy, blue adds more to Squirrel decks than perhaps any other color. You can make a "Counter-Squirrel" aggro-control deck, a tempo-based deck with cards like **Aether Burst** and **Temporal Spring**, or a threshold deck with cards like **Merfolk Looter**, **Mental Note**, and **Careful Study**. Most evilly (and boring, in my opinion), you can combine Squirrels with **Opposition**.

Don't feel like you have to wander the expected route with blue. **Wonder** can find its way to your graveyard to create a "Flying Squirrels" deck, **Keep Watch** is about as Squirrel-friendly a card as they come, and **Unnatural Selection** can make *any* deck a Squirrel deck. Finally, **Cultural Exchange** can nab you something tasty like a **Spiritmonger**--all the while giving your opponent a measly Squirrel--and the artwork makes it a fun theme card.

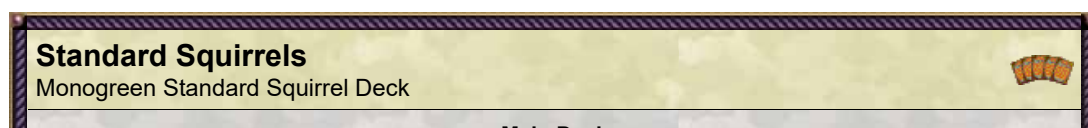


Squirrels: The Final Frontier

If more than one of these ideas appeals to you, there is no reason to limit yourself to a two-color Squirrel deck. Especially while **Invasion** block is around, you might as well go crazy with the number of colors you use. I particularly like **Order/Chaos** as a combination defensive/offensive card for Squirrel decks, and have recently tried to put **Guided Passage** to good Squirrel use.

I hope that this article has given you some ideas with which to get started. Below you'll find some of my sample Squirrel decks, although you will undoubtedly think of additional ways to become "One with the Squirrel." Mmmmm . . . Squirrels.

Next week: My least-favorite block ever.



Main Deck
60 cards

4 Deserted Temple
18 Forest

22 lands

3 Elvish Lyrist
3 Krosan Beast
4 Llanowar Elves
1 Nut Collector
4 Squirrel Mob
4 Sylvan Safekeeper

19 creatures

4 Acorn Harvest
4 Chatter of the Squirrel
3 Coat of Arms
4 Insist
4 Squirrel Nest

19 other spells

Pork

Green-White Standard Squirrel Deck



Main Deck
60 cards

4 Brushland
12 Forest
1 Krosan Verge
5 Plains

22 lands

4 Birds of Paradise
1 Centaur Chieftan
1 Krosan Beast
4 Squirrel Mob
4 Thornscape Familiar

14 creatures

2 Acorn Harvest
4 Chatter of the Squirrel
3 Eladamri's Call
2 Equal Treatment
4 Glorious Anthem
3 March of Souls
2 Ray of Revelation
4 Squirrel Nest

24 other spells

Furry Epic

Squirrel - Epic Struggle Standard Deck



Main Deck
60 cards

4 Brushland
13 Forest
2 Krosan Verge
2 Plains

21 lands

4 Birds of Paradise
4 Llanowar Elves

8 creatures

3 Acorn Harvest
3 Aura Mutation
4 Chatter of the Squirrel
1 Druid's Call
4 Ensnaring Bridge
4 Epic Struggle
1 Parallel Evolution
3 Squirrel Nest
4 Sterling Grove
3 Symbiotic Deployment
1 Worship

31 other spells

Reprocessor

Black-Green Standard Squirrel Deck



Main Deck
60 cards

10 Forest
4 Llanowar Wastes
10 Swamp

24 lands

1 Battlefield Scrounger
2 Quagmire Druid
4 Ravenous Rats
4 Squirrel Mob
4 Wild Mongrel

15 creatures

4 Acorn Harvest
4 Chatter of the Squirrel
2 Overrun
1 Parallel Evolution
4 Reprocess
3 Squirrel Nest
3 Zombie Infestation

21 other spells

Weird Passage

Squirrel - Guided Passage Standard Deck



Main Deck
60 cards

9 Forest	4 Squirrel Mob	3 Acorn Harvest
3 Island	4 Wild Mongrel	4 Chatter of the Squirrel
2 Mountain	3 Wonder	4 Fact or Fiction
4 Shivan Oasis		4 Guided Passage
3 Terminal Moraine	11 creatures	2 Recoup
3 Yavimaya Coast		4 Rites of Initiation
24 lands		4 Squirrel Nest
		25 other spells

Squirrel Titan *Lite!*
Standard Squirrel Deck

Main Deck
60 cards

23 Forest	4 Gorilla Titan	4 Acorn Harvest
23 lands	4 Llanowar Elves	4 Chatter of the Squirrel
	4 Nantuko Tracer	3 Druid's Call
	4 Wild Mongrel	2 Krosan Reclamation
	16 creatures	2 Moment's Peace
		3 Overrun
		3 Squirrel Nest
		21 other spells

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