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# Decks that Morph

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 Thursday, February 13, 2003



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Every week, folks send me cool decklists to read. Before you get too excited about submitting one of your own, I've made it a rule not to give feedback to decklists people send me because of the time involved. But I *do* enjoy reading them, and often the decks I make in my articles are inspired by someone else's cool idea. I consider seeing a horde of innovative decks each week a huge perk of this job.

One kind of deck conspicuously absent from my e-mail has been morph-based decks. Lots of folks send me tribal decks and cycling decks--*Onslaught's* other two key mechanics--but very few people have assembled a deck that really focuses on morph.

The absence of morph decks became a lot more noticeable with the release of *Legions*. Not only does *Legions* provide a horde of new creatures with morph, but there are now a lot more incentives to make a morph deck. Today I'll play around with some of the possibilities here.

First off, let's look at the tools *Onslaught* made available with regards to morph-based decks.

## THE SURPRISE FACTOR

Morph brought a great deal of bluffing into **Magic's** creature battles. Most obviously, then, you may have been excited about tossing a bunch of morph creatures into a deck for no other reason than to keep an opponent guessing. The advantage to a deck like this is an opponent never knowing when to block or when to **Shock** your little faceless dudes as long as you have mana available. The more morph creatures in your deck the better because it decreases the probability of your opponent guessing a critter's identity correctly. And the more varied the abilities the better because it means an opponent can never decide to always block under X condition or never **Shock** under Y condition.

Here is an example of deck meant to maximize this surprise factor:

**From the Shadows**  
 Standard-legal Morph deck

Main Deck 60 cards		
21 Swamp	4 Blood Pet	4 Duress
3 Cabal Coffers	4 Headhunter	4 Cabal Ritual
24 lands	4 Skinthinner	3 Dirge of Dread
	4 Aphetto Exterminator	2 Smother
	4 Grinning Demon	13 other spells
	3 Silent Specter	
	23 creatures	

Unfortunately, these decks sacrifice a lot of speed for their surprise. They want to win through creatures, but they essentially have to cast them creatures twice if they want to gain the advantage of morphing. The bluffing part is great fun, but you might be dead before you can do anything which is, as we all know, less fun.

## MISTER CRAZY

There is one card in *Onslaught* just begging for a morph deck: **Ixidor, Reality Sculptor**. He's a "lord" of face-down creatures (which I still think is really cool) and he can flip any morph card over irrespective of its morph cost. Decks with Ixidor, then, are packed with scary monstrosities like **Krosan Colossus**, **Krosan Cloudscraeper**, **Grinning Demon**, and **Towering Baloth**, combat-tricky fellows like **Riptide Entrancer**, **Headhunter**, and **Snapping Thragg**, and "morph-trigger" freaks from *Legions* like **Skinthinner**, **Nantuko Vigilante**, and **Aphetto Exterminator**.

### Ixidor

The great luxury of a deck with Ixidor is that you really only need access to blue mana and Ixidor for all of your morphing fun. If your creatures stay face-down, they are still legitimate threats at 3/3 and if needed you can flip any of them over for 2. What Ixidor decks need to worry about, then, is how to reliably find Ixidor, how to get him into play quickly, and then how to protect him once he's there. Without Ixidor, an army of **Gray Ogres** is pretty underpowered.

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## DOING THE SLIDE

Finally, [Astral Slide](#) opens the door for a similar disregard of morph costs. By cycling a card, a deck with [Astral Slide](#) can remove its face-down creature from the game, only to have it return as an [Imperial Hellkite](#). This is a pretty cool trick, especially since [Astral Slide](#) doubles as a way of controlling opposing creatures and saving your own from harm.

The real challenge in building a morph deck with [Astral Slide](#) is that you are *really* building a morph-cycling deck. You need enough cards with cycling to get [Astral Slide](#) up and running while also having enough creatures with morph to flip over. Usually this turns out to be too many directions to pull a deck, although I have seen a couple green/white decks that work reasonably well thanks to [Living Wish](#).

In summary, then, if you just look at [Onslaught](#), you have three different reasons for building a morph deck:

- Surprise, which sacrifices speed for massive bluffing fun,
- [Ixidori](#), [Reality Sculptor](#), which is cool except that decks with him tend to rely very heavily on his presence, and
- [Astral Slide](#), which presents lots of deckbuilding challenges in splitting between morph cards and cycling cards.

No wonder so few morph-based decks made their way to my email inbox.



## THE NEW RECRUITS

Along comes [Legions](#) and now the incentives start to look pretty attractive:

### Primal Whisperer

[Primal Whisperer](#) is to morph decks what [Yavimaya Enchantress](#) is to [Enchantress decks](#)--he (hopefully) gets really big as the game progresses. He is by far the least exciting new addition to the morph parade, but he fits into existing morph deck reasonably well. For example, if you can't find your [Ixidori](#), at least you have a backup plan for generating offense from the faceless 2/2s you may or may not be able to morph. Here's a deck that hopefully illustrates this point...

Lies & Whispers		
Onslaught Block Morph deck		
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards		
14 <a href="#">Island</a>	4 <a href="#">Wall of Deceit</a>	3 <a href="#">Chain of Vapor</a>
12 <a href="#">Forest</a>	4 <a href="#">Willbender</a>	3 other spells
26 lands	4 <a href="#">Echo Tracer</a>	
	4 <a href="#">Nantuko Vigilante</a>	
	4 <a href="#">Ixidori, Reality Sculptor</a>	
	4 <a href="#">Primal Whisperer</a>	
	3 <a href="#">Hystrodon</a>	
	2 <a href="#">Clone</a>	
	1 <a href="#">Quicksilver Dragon</a>	
	1 <a href="#">Krosan Cloudscraper</a>	
	31 creatures	

### Master of the Veil and Weaver of Lies

As I said when [previewing Warbreak Trumpeter](#), the lure of the morph-trigger card is finding a way to reuse the flipping-over ability. [Backslide](#) went from complete trash to sort of intriguing thanks to morph-trigger, and two cards from [Legions](#)--[Master of the Veil](#) and [Weaver of Lies](#)--complete the set of ways to get repeated uses out of a card like [Bane of the Living](#). Since all of these cards are blue, it's easy to envision a deck that adds "bounce" cards like [Echo Tracer](#) and [Chain of Vapor](#) to fulfill the morphing madness.

Here is an expensive deck to build because of its high rare-count, but it sure is packed with morph-trigger tricks...

Wiz-Bang	
Onslaught Block Morph deck	
<b>Main Deck</b> 60 cards	

20 Island	3 Voidmage Apprentice	4 Backslide
4 Grand Coliseum	4 Willbender	2 Chain of Vapor
24 lands	4 Voidmage Prodigy	6 other spells
	4 Echo Tracer	
	4 Merchant of Secrets	
	3 Master of the Veil	
	3 Tribal Forcemage	
	2 Ixidor, Reality Sculptor	
	2 Weaver of Lies	
	1 Arcanis the Omnipotent	
	30 creatures	

## Planar Guide

Remember when I pointed out that the trouble with building a morph deck with **Astral Slide** is that you have to worry about finding room for both morph cards and cycling cards? Well, *Legions* took care of a lot of these issues with **Planar Guide**. Like **Astral Slide**, **Planar Guide** will remove your creatures from the game and put morph cards back into play face-up. Unlike **Astral Slide**, the Guide doesn't rely on cycling at all and affects *all* of your creatures. The advantage here, then, is that you can forget worrying about cycling and instead load up on morphers. Check out Anthony's recent [article](#) for a very explicit look at **Planar Guide**.

## Dermoplasm

Finally, *Legions* provides two brand new ways to make a morph deck. The first is **Dermoplasm**, which has a **Shifty Doppelganger** feel to him but without a lot of the drawbacks of the **Shifty One**. **Dermoplasm** can care less about morph-trigger and creatures that do interesting things when they damage an opponent. **Dermoplasm** wants big, snarling, deadly creatures it can put directly into play. (Why does **Dermoplasm** suddenly feel like The Rock?)

In fact, **Dermoplasm** is a much better compliment to **Ixidor, Reality Sculptor** than **Primal Whisperer** because it a) is blue, and b) provides a second way to turn high-cost morph cards into quick creature beatings. The only real downside is that any deck you make is going to be stuffed full of rares, the likes of **Exalted Angel**, **Krosan Cloudscaper**, **Quicksilver Dragon**, **Silent Specter**, and **Rockshard Elemental**.

## Skirk Alarmist

**Skirk Alarmist** rounds out the reasons to build a morph deck and may be my favorite of the bunch. His ability can be used the same turn he comes into play thanks to haste, and he can take full advantage of both the "I have big morph creatures waiting to be unleashed" and the "I have morph-trigger creatures waiting to mess with you" tactics.

Everything I have said about **Ixidor, Reality Sculptor** applies to **Skirk Alarmist** except that the Alarmist is cheaper and isn't a Legend. It isn't blue, either, which means a really dedicated morph deck with the Alarmist in it is going to run the same too-reliant-on-a-single-card problem as **Ixidor** decks unless the deck dips into a second color (in particular, blue). Either that, or it needs a backup plan. An example backup plan is in the deck below, which can quickly become a threshold-Dragon deck.

Dinner Bells 		
Standard-legal Morph deck		
Main Deck 60 cards		
16 Mountain	4 Skirk Alarmist	4 Firebolt
4 Forgotten Cave	4 Skirk Marauder	4 Fire Diamond
4 Barbarian Ring	4 Shaleskin Plover	4 Chain of Plasma
24 lands	4 Fledgling Dragon	12 other spells
	4 Imperial Hellkite	
	3 Snapping Thragg	
	1 Rorix Bladewing	
	24 creatures	

Hopefully today has tickled your brain a little about the possibilities surrounding morph-based decks. Thanks to *Legions*, now every color--even black because of **Faceless Butcher**--can play around with gargantuan morph cards and morph-trigger effects. Play around with the options and see what you can create. Pretty soon, maybe you can even earn the impressive nickname "Sir Morph-A-Lot," "Flipper," or "Trigger Happy" amongst your group of friends.

Next week: A different environment.

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