

Mark Gottlieb

Thursday, October 02, 2003

Finally, Artifact Creature Week! I had anticipated this a while back. I like to keep a column or two in my pocket (just in case, right?), and it was a given that Artifact Creature Week would pop up on the calendar. I had an awesome *Onslaught* block deck exploiting the obvious synergies between Tribal Golem and Proteus Machine, along with, um, hm. No matter. *Eighth Edition* delivers the goods: it's got six artifact creatures, and two of them even cost less than 6 mana! One of those can even attack! All right, I admit it wasn't a scintillating article. Truth be told, it doesn't even exist and I was lying to you, my dear, trusting readers, for shameful comedic effect. It's a good thing that Artifact Creature Week rolled around just after the release of *Mirrodin*. What a coincidence, huh?

*Mirrodin* has a whopping 49 artifact creatures in it. Compare this to the 1 in *Scourge*, 1 in *Onslaught*, 5 in *Odyssey*, and 0 in *Torment*, *Judgment*, and *Legions*. This is normally where I'd make some snide comment poking fun at the *Mirrodin* artifact creatures, but I ran into a bit of a problem with that: They're all good. Some are meant for Limited, some are Constructed tournament-worthy, and some are goofy but fun in casual. But, unfortunately, there's nothing truly deserving of any kind of scorn or derision. Except Omega Myr.

## Free For All

If you examine that last paragraph carefully, you'll realize that I'm saying Triskelion is good. Sure. Platinum Angel is good. OK. Ornithopter is good. What? Well, it is. This is a new day and age, folks. One in which your Ornithopter can grab a Loxodon Warhammer in one hand (do Ornithopters even have hands?), a Fireshrieker in the other, and go to town. Yikes—that is one baaaaaad Ornithopter. I don't recommend equipping it with Neurok Hoversail, however. (Hey—from a Neurok design perspective, what exactly is the difference between an Ornithopter and a Hoversail? And how come the wing frame imbued with life is cheaper than the supposedly simpler, unalive version? Just some philosophical ponderings. And I'm one of the members of Wizards of the Coast R&D who's not running around with a philosophy degree in my pocket.)

Another newfound advantage of Ornithopter V.6 (counting *Antiquities* and the four Core Sets it's appeared in) is that it now feeds spells with affinity. Imagine this crazy first-turn play: You drop a Seat of the Synod, an Ornithopter, and a Welding Jar. Follow it up with a Tooth of Chiss-Goriah, which now costs you 1 mana thanks to affinity. Then, using the same trick, give yourself the gift of a 2/2 Frogmite, also for free. Finally, play Thoughtcast for only 4 to start refilling your hand. You've got an attack power of 3, some evasion, some regeneration, and you still have 3 cards in your hand. Your opponent hasn't even taken a turn yet. This is pretty unlikely, especially with the card ratios I've put into my first deck, but it illustrates my point. I haven't mentioned my point yet? Here it is: Affinity is bonkers.

This deck is centered around three artifact creatures: Frogmite, a 2/2 for not-really-4, Myr Enforcer, a 4/4 for not-even-close-to-7, and Lodestone Myr, which gains a different benefit from having a board full of artifacts. An artifact land basically produces 2 mana when casting



a Frogmite or Enforcer, or you can tap that land to give Lodestone Myr +1/+1. Since there are only eight colored spells in this deck, it includes a sizable number of off-color artifact lands purely for these bonuses. It also has a small arsenal of varied Equipment (and feel free, as always, to adjust to your tastes) because Equipment interacts so well with Lodestone Myr. Tapping is completely meaningless to Equipment. When you tap a creature, you don't tap the Equipment attached to it. Equipment can be equipped whether tapped or untapped, and it always works when tapped. So besides giving strong bonuses to your Ornithopters, Pentavites, Yotian Soldiers, and even Lodestone Myrs, a piece of Equipment is always a free tap to power up Mr. Magnetism itself.

## To Affinity... and Beyond!



### Main Deck

60 cards

4 Ancient Den	2 Auriok Steelshaper	1 Banshee's Blade
4 Flooded Strand	1 Broodstar	2 Bonesplitter
3 Great Furnace	4 Frogmite	1 Fireshrieker
4 Island	4 Lodestone Myr	1 Loxodon Warhammer
2 Plains	4 Myr Enforcer	2 Sculpting Steel
4 Seat of the Synod	2 Ornithopter	4 Thoughtcast
3 Tree of Tales	1 Pentavus	1 Tooth of Chiss-Goriah
	1 Taj-Nar Swordsmith	1 Vulshok Gauntlets
24 lands	2 Yotian Soldier	2 Welding Jar
	21 creatures	15 other spells

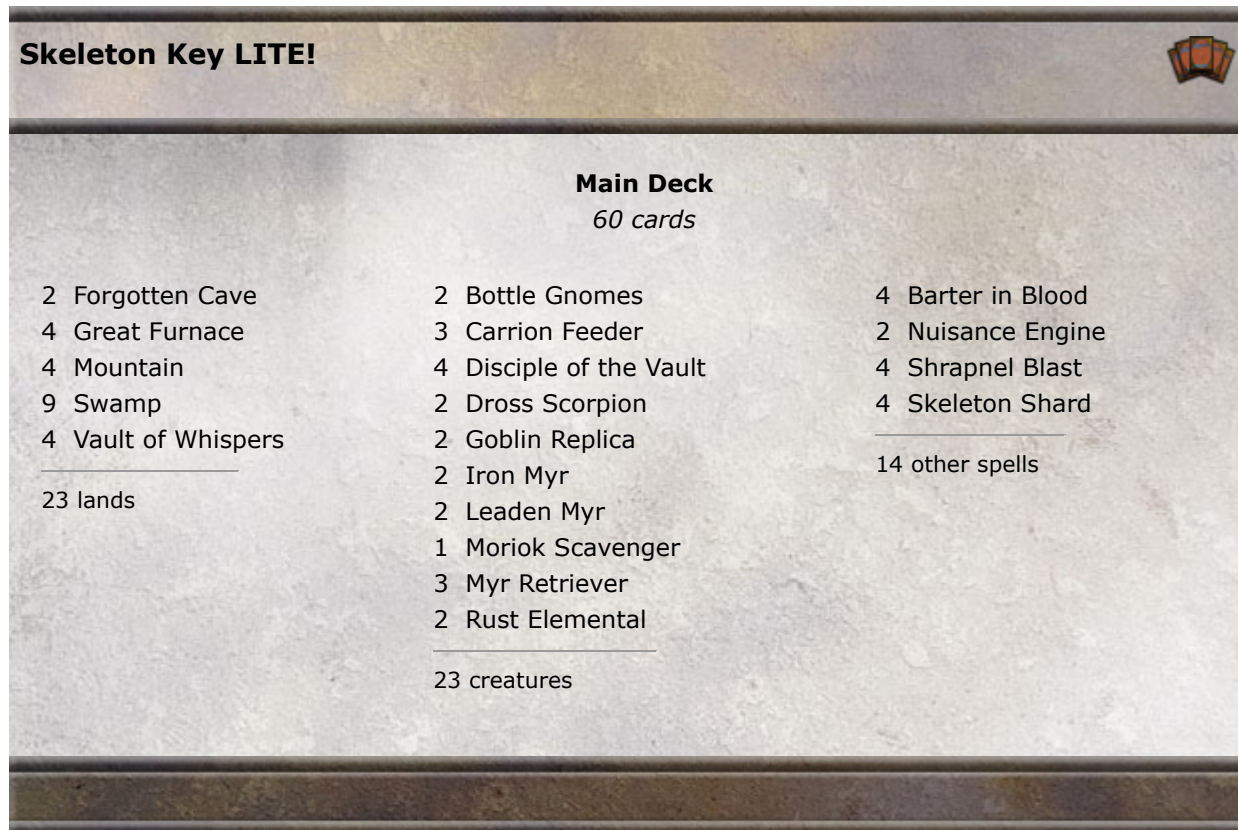
## Fables of the Reconstruction

Why choose artifact creatures over creatures in your colors? You're almost certainly playing with lands that produce colored mana, and artifact creatures are probably worse than the creatures that color naturally provides. They have to be, or colored creatures would become obsolete, right? You may be surprised. Look at Cathodion. Does blue provide a 3/3 body for 3 mana? Look at Gold Myr. Does white have a Llanowar Elves variant? Sometimes you recruit artifact creatures because you're looking for attributes that your color doesn't have. Based on size and abilities, an artifact creature is less efficient than a creature in the ideal color... but it may be better than a creature in your color.

There's another reason to use artifact creatures, and that's to power up a combo! Skeleton Shard is a great method of graveyard recursion, but only with artifact creatures. The same goes for Myr Retriever and Moriok Scavenger. Rust Elemental is very reminiscent of a 1/2-size Lord of the Pit, but it needs to eat artifacts. Shrapnel Blast can eliminate a lot of things (like your opponent) very efficiently but it also needs an artifact to go boom. Of course, Shrapnel Blast is a lot better when the



artifact you sacrifice is Myr Retriever (which brings another artifact back to your hand) and you have both a Skeleton Shard (to regrow the Retriever) and a Disciple of the Vault (for even more pain) on the table.



**Skeleton Key LITE!**

**Main Deck**  
60 cards

2 Forgotten Cave	2 Bottle Gnomes	4 Barter in Blood
4 Great Furnace	3 Carrion Feeder	2 Nuisance Engine
4 Mountain	4 Disciple of the Vault	4 Shrapnel Blast
9 Swamp	2 Dross Scorpion	4 Skeleton Shard
4 Vault of Whispers	2 Goblin Replica	<hr/>
<hr/>	2 Iron Myr	14 other spells
23 lands	2 Leaden Myr	
	1 Moriok Scavenger	
	3 Myr Retriever	
	2 Rust Elemental	
	<hr/>	
	23 creatures	

This deck was originally monoblack, but Shrapnel Blast fit too well to leave out. Nuisance Engine is straight-up better than the beloved Breeding Pit, and it will churn out Pest tokens ripe for sacrifice to Rust Elemental, Shrapnel Blast, Barter in Blood, and Carrion Feeder. As you're doing all this sacrificing and recursion, be sure to have as many Disciples out as you can. Don't underestimate those evil little Humans; they can end a game in a hurry. If you're feeling indulgent enough to add rare cards to this Lite deck, you've got plenty of options-but the first one I'd pick is definitely Grave Pact.

## Level Up

I'm going to close today with one of the more unusual artifact creatures to see the light of day. And with an analogy.

**Tempting Wurm : *Onslaught* :: Leveler : *Mirrodin***



It's that highly undercosted creature (power and toughness at least double the converted mana cost) in the set that comes with a bit of baggage—a heinous, you'll-probably-lose-the-game-now comes-into-play ability. The 10/10 (plus drawbacks) Leviathan and the 9/9 (with no drawbacks at all) Krosan Colossus both cost 9 mana, so removing your library from the game seems to only save you 4 or 5 mana. Some coupon that turns out to be.

Surprisingly, there are lots of ways to keep playing the game with an empty library. Why, *Obstinate Familiar* will let you do it! So will *Abundance*. But from that point on, you're just spinning your wheels. You'll never see a new card the rest of the game (which, since you've got a 10/10 creature out, you hope is mercifully short).

You can create a new library by shuffling cards back into it. *Reminisce*, *Feldon's Cane*, *Thran Foundry* - but those rely on your having cards in your graveyard first. You want to get *Leveler* out as quickly as possible, so that becomes a less attractive plan. *Tel-Jilad Stylus* will let you keep putting your permanents back into your library. Once you've got an empty library, you could get some recursion going using a creature with a comes-into-play ability (a good one). You'll draw it and play it every turn! But basing a combo on the premise of an empty library is like building a house on a quicksand lot. Verrrry squishy.

Your best bet is simply to replace your draw with something else. Any of the *Onslaught* Words enchantments will take care of that for you and still let you get a beneficial effect out of your draw step. And then we get to the 5-mana blue enchantments. *Parallel Thoughts* lets you create a sub-library of seven cards. It will help you find a *Leveler* in the first place, and it will prevent you from losing via decking for a few turns once the *Leveler* is out. *Shared Fate* is even better: It lets you "draw" and play cards from your opponent's library while your opponent does the same with your library... but wait... you don't have any cards in your library! Did you see that? *Leveler* just transformed from a colorless fatty into a combo lock. Your opponent won't see any new cards for the rest of the game.

There is one more way to get around *Leveler*'s anti-library antics, and that's with *Stifle*. But that's boring.

Just in case things don't go your way *Leveler*-wise, a *Grid Monitor* will accomplish much the same effect at half the size. You'll either win the game with it, or it will be removed and the path will be clear for a *Leveler*. (Or you'll lose, but that kinda kills the vibe we had going.) I included a couple of

pieces of Equipment (Lightning Greaves and Vorrac Battlehorns) because we want to start attacking with our 10/10 immediately, we don't want said 10/10 bounced or Shattered, and we certainly don't want that 10/10 to fail to deliver massive doses of damage while being chump blocked until our library tricks collapse like a house of... well, you know.

## Librarian's Nightmare



### Main Deck

60 cards

2 Flooded Strand  
14 Island  
4 Lonely Sandbar  
4 Seat of the Synod  

---

24 lands

2 Grid Monitor  
4 Leveler  

---

6 creatures

4 Boomerang  
4 Concentrate  
2 Lightning Greaves  
4 Mana Leak  
2 Parallel Thoughts  
3 Shared Fate  
2 Stifle  
1 Tel-Jilad Stylus  
4 Thirst for Knowledge  
2 Vorrac Battlehorns  
2 Words of Wind  

---

30 other spells

Until next week, have fun with colorless critters.

Mark

---

Mark may be reached at [houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com](mailto:houseofcardsmail@yahoo.com). Send rules-related **Magic** questions to [ask@wizards.com](mailto:ask@wizards.com).

---

© 1995-2009 Wizards of the Coast LLC, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)

