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Ah, Flying Week. It was only a matter of time before one of the most basic and pervasive **Magic** abilities got its very own week. And, as a special treat, I'll be discussing in great length and detail the comparative benefits between Flight, Buoyancy, Air Bladder, Aboshan's Desire, Soar, Launch, Crown of Ascension, Snow Devil, Gliding Lcid, Shimmering Wings, Phantom Wings, Ghostly Wings, Illuminated Wings, Dragon Wings, Wings of Hope, Wings of Aesthir, and, of course, Neurok Hoversail. Oh, wait a sec—I forgot that would be Kevin Costner-movie-grade boring. Never mind.

Instead, let's get right to the good stuff: Discussing the comparative differences between Jump, Leap, Updraft, Defy Gravity... or not. How about creatures with built-in flying? Since flying was one of the original Alpha creature abilities, you know it's quite basic and easy to understand, just like banding, regeneration, trample, and protection from white. What's that? You never heard of banding? Ah, Banding Week. It was only a matter of time before I went off on another tangent. Nah, forget about it. Banding Week—like that'll happen in a million years.

Flying is the most ubiquitous evasion ability in the game. What does that mean? It's defined as "existing everywhere; omnipresent." Oh, "evasion ability." That's an ability that makes a creature difficult to block. The more difficult it is to block, the more likely it will be to smack your opponent around in combat. The more you smack your opponent around in combat, the more likely you are to win. Flying isn't as good as straight-up unblockability, it's not as situationally swingy as fear (which is sometimes great and sometimes useless), and it's not block-specific (or criminally undercosted) like shadow. Nope, it's just a healthy, necessary, and standard part of the game that divides the battlefield into two layers and lets artists draw cool feathery wings.

A Wing and a Prayer

How can you make flying work for you? Clog the ground with cheap Walls, fill the skies with cheap flying attackers, and you'll dispatch a lot of opposing decks before they know what hit them.

Look at the cheap flying creatures available in *Eighth Edition*, and you'll get a lesson in where flying fits in the color wheel. White gets a 1/1 with flying for ***.** Blue has to pay **1** for its flying 1/1, but unless you're stuck with Sea Eagle, you get a bonus prize like rearranging the top of your deck, +0/+1, or a built-in Force Spike. That implies that blue would get a 1/1 with flying for just **1** if it was any good at creatures, but it's not. In black, **1** will buy you the straight-up 1/1 flying creature, while red feels the burn with a 1/1 creature with flying and a *drawback* for **1**. And green? Excepting the exceptional Birds of Paradise (which is, after all, an exception), green's comparable creature is Canopy Spider, a 1/3 for **1** with anti-flying.

Broadening our horizons to the Standard card pool, we see that a flying 2/2 with no other abilities costs either ****** or **2**. For **1****, you can get a flying 2/2 with another good ability. Blue provides some good airborne creatures for **2**, and black does the same for **1**, but the cream of the flock is in white—as long as you're willing to commit to the color. If you want the best flying weenies, you have to either go monowhite, which will limit your options, or include a painful mana base so you can access blue. I wanted to make a Lite deck, so Flooded Strand was left stranded, and the deck I built has so many one-drops that Coastal Tower could really hurt. So monowhite it is!

Flight Attendance **Lite!**



Main Deck

60 cards

18 Plains	2 Aven Liberator	2 Banshee's Blade	
4 Secluded Steppe	3 Cloudreach Cavalry	4 Bonesplitter	
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22 lands	2 Diving Griffin	2 Fireshrieker	
	4 Gustcloak Harrier	2 Lightning Greaves	
	4 Leonin Skyhunter	<hr/>	
	3 Slith Ascendant	10 other spells	
	2 Steel Wall		
	4 Suntail Hawk		
	4 Wall of Hope		
	<hr/>		
	28 creatures		

Yes, every creature in that deck that isn't a Wall can fly, though the Cloudreach Cavalry needs some help. In white, you're not paying much for the ability at all, so you might as well include as many flyers as possible. The mix of Equipment that bolsters your air force is up to you; Leonin Scimitar got left out of the mix, but it's a fine inclusion as well.

Jump!

And that concludes everything I can say about flying. Put some creatures with flying into your deck and attack with them because they're hard to block. The end.

What? Not satisfied? Fine, then let's go to the next logical step. I'm sure that when you read "flying," your minds all naturally leapt to rare red *Legends* Enchant Worlds. Well, just one. Gravity Sphere.

"But Mark," you say (or at least I hope that's you, dear reader, because whenever my cats start talking to me, it really freaks me out), "this is Flying Week! Isn't taking flying away from everything antithetical to the very premise?" Well lah-di-dah, look who has a fancy vocabulary all of a sudden. And just think, seven paragraphs ago you didn't know what "ubiquitous" meant. The reason Gravity Sphere fits in here is because after grounding all the creatures in the game, I'm going to relaunch mine. The Sphere removes flying from all creatures already in play. And it removes flying from any new creature with an innate flying ability that comes into play. But if a creature *gains* flying, that's applied after the Sphere's static ability—and it sticks.



Plenty of creatures can give themselves flying at a moment's notice. We all know about Morphling, a creature so reviled I'll never include it in a casual deck. But how about Killer Whale? Telethopter? Hyalopterous Lemure? (OK, you caught me. This is just a silly creature names deck; it has nothing to do with flying at all.) Putrid Imp, Fledgling Imp, Grotesque Hybrid, and Coastal Hornclaw all eat up resources when they learn to fly. But that can be turned into an advantage. By sacrificing lands and discarding cards, the deck gets to threshold to power up Swirling Sandstorm... which will hit every creature except the ones that were tossed into the air. Kamahl's Desire also enjoys having threshold, and a +3/+0 on one of your unblockable creatures isn't a bad thing. Oversold Cemetery helps you defray your card losses in the long game, and Form of the Dragon combos with Gravity Sphere to make you immune to combat.

Weight of the World



Main Deck

60 cards

2 Darkwater Catacombs	1 Coastal Hornclaw	2 Crosis's Catacombs
2 Faerie Conclave	3 Fledgling Imp	2 Earthquake
4 Salt Marsh	1 Flowstone Sculpture	1 Form of the Dragon
2 Shadowblood Ridge	2 Grotesque Hybrid	4 Gravity Sphere
4 Shivan Reef	2 Hyalopterous Lemure	2 Kamahl's Desire
2 Sulfurous Springs	1 Kavu Glider	2 Oversold Cemetery
2 Underground River	2 Killer Whale	3 Swirling Sandstorm
4 Urborg Volcano	2 Mist Dragon	
	3 Putrid Imp	16 other spells
22 lands	2 Rootwater Thief	
	1 Telethopter	
	2 Whiptongue Frog	
	22 creatures	

Shooting Skeet

I've done straightforward and I've done obscure. Time to be subversive. There's another way to use flying, and that's as a weapon. Sometimes flying is a very bad thing for a creature to have—for example, when a Silklash Spider is on the table. A creature without flying is a lot safer in that case; one that's hovering in the air has a bull's-eye painted on it. And that's where a little bull's-eye distribution machine called Ana Disciple comes into play. Step 1: Your opponent's creature gains flying. ("Pull!") Step 2: That creature gets shot out of the sky. ("POW!")

There are lots of ways to pull off the same two-component combo. Balloon Peddler (a badass creature concept if I ever saw one) is another option that repeatedly sends creatures hurtling upwards. In addition to the Disciple, I've chosen to use Power Matrix (which doubles as an offensive weapon) and Launch (which is also reusable and is much harder to permanently disable). Hurricane and its variants (Canopy Surge, Claws of Wirewood, and Squallmonger, to name a few) knock creatures from the air into the graveyard and shorten the game via green direct damage. Wing Snare flat-out destroys any creature too big to be dispatched by damage. And, of course, there's the card that combines both parts of the combo into one sweet package: Predator, Flagship.

I was making a deck, wasn't I? The main offense comes via full complements of Treetop Rangers and Treetop Scouts, which are completely unblockable with all the flyer hate in this deck. Rancor speeds things up, which is what you want in a deck crammed with symmetrical direct damage. If I'm going out of my way to use green's creature kill, I'm certainly going to use green's offensive stomppower as well.

Shipwrecked

Diverting myself to a completely irrelevant topic, why is Predator just an artifact? Pirate Ship established Ship as a creature type all the way back in Alpha, though it would be quite a while before the odd little line "Creature — Ship" actually appeared on a card. Stronghold Zeppelin was a *Nemesis* Ship, but the eminently shippish Predator, Flagship in the same set was not. Skyship Weatherlight suffered the same fate when it was printed the set before Living Airship (a Ship that finally makes sense as a creature).

In total, there have been fourteen Ship creatures, all blue except for Battle Squadron... which has flying! (A thematic tie-in. How lucky.) Even besides our two legendary non-Ship ships, Ships have had a confusing little run. Reef Pirates is a Ship. Rishadan Airship is a Pirate. And that was in *Mercadian Masques*, a set that included two cards with creature type Ship! Oh, well. We haven't seen a Ship creature since *Apocalypse*, so perhaps they've been retired forever. I just hope Ship Week isn't coming up anytime soon because I've just blown all my material.



Flyswatter



Main Deck

60 cards

2 City of Brass	3 Ana Disciple	3 Claws of Wirewood
13 Forest	2 Femeref Archers	2 Hurricane
2 Reflecting Pool	3 Silklash Spider	3 Launch
4 Yavimaya Coast	3 Squallmonger	2 Power Matrix
21 lands		1 Predator, Flagship

4 Treetop Rangers

4 Treetop Scout

19 creatures



3 Rancor

3 Treva's Ruins

3 Wing Snare

20 other spells

The land base is tricky; after all this time, green and blue still don't play well together. The only blue effects in the deck belong to Launch and Ana Disciple, but since they're effects you intend to use repeatedly, painlands aren't a pleasant solution.

The deck could go monogreen. It already includes Power Matrix and Predator, Flagship: artifacts that grant flying. There are others, such as Flying Carpet (of course) and Whalebone Glider. There's also (ye gods!) the rare *Legends* card Pixie Queen. A  1/1, it bestows flying on a target for the low, low cost of . Unfortunately, it itself flies, so it would probably get caught by Hurricane and Squallmonger—unless you have a Phyrexian Splicer out too. In the end, sticking with the Queen's *Apocalypse* descendant Ana Disciple wasn't too difficult a decision.

Until next week, have fun with flying.

Mark

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