



MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

▾ [Related links](#)

➔ [Read other articles](#)

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search ▾ ➔

Beacon of Creation



Adrian Sullivan · *Single-Card Strategies*
Wednesday, July 14, 2004

It doesn't seem like all that long ago that I started going to **Magic** tournaments in earnest. I had gotten my first taste of the PTQs back in 1996, and I was a bit hooked. I wanted more. In one auspicious event back in early 1997 there was a big PTQ in far off Minneapolis, and no one wanted to go. Spurred on by my good friend Kevin, I decided to take a Greyhound to the event and I negotiated the city buses to Dreamers.

It was an auspicious event for many reasons. One of the biggest and brightest was beginning a deck collaboration with soon-to-be genius Brian Kowal. Kowal and I would make a lot of decks together and separately, but it was the feedback and advice that we gave each other that would help shape a lot of each of our most successful decks. Also exciting for me that weekend was getting within a stone's throw of Top 8 with my mono-green control deck, Green Machine.

Green Machine would give me a slew of Top 16s, but no Top 8s. The deck ran a slew of disruption, excellent library manipulation (Bob Maher would end up coining the local nickname "Sullivan Library" for *Sylvan Library* after I played so many decks with the card) and graveyard recycling from *Soldevi Diggers*, and a pair of finishers: green's own *Nightmare*, *Uktabi Wildcats*, and a few more cats in *Waiting in the Weeds*.

When *Fifth Dawn* came out, I was pretty busy with a lot of the non-**Magic** parts of my life and so I only skimmed the spoiler. It didn't take more than a day or two for my friend Sol Malka to write me a little e-mail about this week's card, *Beacon of Creation*.



"I bet you loved to see this card! It's like a **Waiting in the Weeds** and a **Soldevi Digger**, all in one card!"

I had to laugh a bit. I always like being reminded of the old decks I played and **Green Machine** is one of my favorites. I still have my old beat-to-death **Waiting in the Weeds** cards sitting in a box near my desk. There really isn't much use in them except for nostalgia, but all the same I like having them there. The problem with **Waiting in the Weeds** is that even though it was cheaper, it really didn't often make many little 1/1 Cats. Since **Waiting in the Weeds** only made a cat for every untapped forest, you could find yourself spending your 3 mana and only getting a couple of them. Even worse, if your opponent happened to be playing Forests, they got some cats of their own. And worse still, the art on the card didn't look very catlike!

Well, **Beacon of Creation** does all of the things that **Waiting in the Weeds** might have wanted to, and does it better. **Beacon of Creation** doesn't give your opponent creatures. **Beacon of Creation** may cost 1 mana more, but you'll almost certainly have more 1/1s than you would have with a **Weeds** (and never fewer). Finally, **Beacon of Creation** jumps right back into your deck, without needing any help from a **Gaea's Blessing** or **Soldevi Digger**. About the only thing that *isn't* a strength of **Beacon of Creation** is that if it resolves, it isn't going to be available in your graveyard for various different Regrowth effects like **Recoup**, **All Suns' Dawn**, and **Eternal Witness**.

The Ecology of Beacon of Creation

One of the first things that becomes obvious about the insects of **Beacon of Creation** is that they absolutely thrive in forests. In a lot of ways, this strongly limits the deck design possibilities of the card. While you can certainly cast **Beacon of Creation** in a multi-color deck, you are not going to be getting the most of it unless you are running nearly all forests.

For the deck that *isn't* mono-green, there are a few options. One of the first and best options is to combine the use of **Birds of Paradise** with the appropriate colored lands between **Wooded Foothills** and **Windswept Heath**. By using **Onslaught's** fetch lands, you can run a bare minimum of non-Forests. Especially when combined with **Birds of Paradise** (or in an Elf-heavy deck, **Birchlore Rangers**), you can maintain a second color without losing too much oomph from the **Beacon**.



Another exciting option is to use **Paradise Mantle**. While **Paradise Mantle** won't be all that much for accelerating your mana, essentially, since **Paradise Mantle** turns any of your creatures into a Bird of Paradise, you can spend your single Green mana to filter it into any color of mana. A spare insect (or two) should do the trick here, and have you casting any spell you might want. **Joiner Adept** also pulls off the same trick just as neatly.

For any **Beacon** deck, getting a bunch of forests in play is going to be a great boon. Certainly you don't have to actively hunt out forests; even without trying to go gung ho about getting forests, you should have a goodly amount of insects. If you *do* go gung ho, you can change a goodly amount to an absurd amount.

There are a ton of good choices here. Just within the Standard environment some of the better ones include **Journey of Discovery** and **Explosive Vegetation**. **Wood Elf** and **Wirewood Symbiote** should work wonders together to provide all the forests you need. Slightly older cards to think about are **Skyshroud Claim**, **Thawing**

Glaciers (a choice I'm always fond of), and **Silverglade Pathfinder** (a glaciers on legs). The more forests you get, the more insects you get to smack your opponent around with.

An Army of Ants

In one episode of **MacGuyver** from about a million years ago, Richard Dean Anderson saved the day (and a whole country!) from a huge insect army. It wasn't easy, though. That many insects could sure accomplish a lot. And they can do a lot for you. There are a whole slew of ways to turn all of those **Beacon of Creation** tokens into your personal workhorses. The first (and perhaps best) choice here is **Skullclamp**. When you have an army of 1/1s, a **Skullclamp** is an incredible way to create some card-drawing. Of course, **Skullclamp** is so powerful that it was banned in Block and Standard constructed, but there are other formats one can play. With a

Skullclamp in play, it won't be that uncommon for you to get 2 cards for every land you have in play. That's a lot of cards.

Symbiotic Deployment is another interesting option. Here, the card drawing isn't as dramatic, but you aren't losing the insects. When you're ready, they can still turn around and fight. If they are ready to fight, a **Fecundity** can turn all of your dying friends (even tokens!) into valuable cards. On the other hand, if you're able to keep your creatures around, **Collective Unconscious** and **Slate of Ancestry** will be able to give you a huge handful of cards in one quick fix.



Drawing cards isn't the only way to get card advantage though. Sometimes, just making a lot of creatures will do the trick. After a **Beacon of Creation** has got you started, you can follow up with a **Parallel Evolution**. **Parallel Evolution** makes a copy of every token that is in play and it has Flashback. One good **Beacon of Creation**, let's say for 5 Insects, becomes 20 insects after you've cast **Parallel Evolution** and then flashed it back. I don't even want to think about how many insect tokens I'd be staring down if someone *really* wanted to make a lot of tokens.

Them!

There are a lot of classic science-fiction movies that include not only lots of bugs, but lots of *big* bugs. Having a lot of 1/1s can be great, but sometimes you really do want to have a big creature. You could say that an easy start might be **Shared Triumph**, giving all your insects +1/+1, but really, that's still Small Thinking. We want to think *big!*

It's hard to get any bigger than **Coat of Arms**. Even a modest turn 4 **Beacon of Creation** (making 4 insects) gets crazy with a turn 5 **Coat of Arms**. With only 4, you've got 16 power worth of insects, and with 5, you've got 25! The math is simple: just square the number of insects you've made, and that's how much damage they can all do. If you manage to get 10, you've got 100 power on the table.

Creature enchantments can work similarly. **Aspect of Wolf** gets stronger with each forest you have in play, and that's a goal you have anyway. **Alpha Status** gives +2/+2 for each other creature of a similar type. If you're playing with **Beacon of Creation**, each of these is going to be much better than they might otherwise be.



Think big! No, bigger than that!

During combat, there are a number of clever things that can be done. **Echoing Courage** is a truly great option here, with *all* of your insects getting the boost for a tiny two mana. If you have a bunch more mana to throw around, **Tribal Unity** should make it so that almost any defending player is going to have to call it quits. **Fangren Firstborn** isn't tricky like those other spells, but it gets the job done. Even if your Firstborn dies during an attack, pumping up all of your other attacking insects permanently isn't something to sneeze at.

More Unusual Uses

If your Beacon is making a lot of creatures, it's hard not to think of a card like **Opposition**. Turning each insect into a little **Icy Manipulator** can make it nearly impossible for an opponent to get back into the game. Of course, the problem of two blue mana in the casting cost of the **Opposition** is going to make some of the mana fixing mentioned above even more important. In this case, I think that the **Joiner Adept** is probably one of your best bets.

Intruder Alarm is another great option. **Intruder Alarm** triggers every time that a creature enters play. Add in a few mana creatures, and your **Beacon of Creation** can trigger a mana explosion. Even with only a single **Birds of Paradise** out with an **Intruder Alarm**, a **Beacon of Creation** will create one mana for every forest you have in play. Each other mana creature will create that much more mana. Add in a wee bit of card drawing, and you should be ready to win the game right there!

Finally, there are plenty of cards that want to eat creatures or other things to stick around. With last week's Demon Week just back around the corner, it's hard not to think about cards like [Minion of Leshrac](#) or [Lord of the Pit](#), but there are other cards as well. [Smokestack](#) and [Braids](#) also like to eat permanents. More recently, [Possessed Portal](#) also likes to eat cards.

Wrapping Up

There are a lot of really fun things to do with [Beacon of Creation](#). I'm going to go about recreating my pet deck from 1997, Green Machine. If I were to bring it back for post *Fifth Dawn* Extended it might look a little something like this:

Green Machine 5D Extended		
60 cards		
17 Forest	3 Uktabi Wildcats	4 Skullclamp
4 Wasteland	4 Llanowar Elves	4 Winter's Grasp
21 land	4 Vine Trellis	4 Plow Under
	4 Wood Elves	4 Oblivion Stone
	4 Eternal Witness	4 Beacon of Creation
	19 creatures	20 other spells

This deck uses [Wood Elves](#) to help seek out additional forests to help power up the [Beacon of Creation](#). In addition, while the deck doesn't get to use [Sylvan Library](#), it does get to use [Skullclamp](#), easily dispatching [Llanowar Elves](#), [Wood Elves](#), and [Eternal Witness](#). Of course, as we've already mentioned, [Skullclamp](#) combined with [Beacon of Creation](#) is pretty crazy. With both the [Wood Elves](#) and the card drawing, there is a great likelihood of a fair number of forests, so I've also included my old favorite [Uktabi Wildcats](#). The Wildcats conveniently live through [Oblivion Stone](#) and can be expected to pack quite a wallop.

Overall, since I'm patterning this deck after an older deck, it could use a bit of work to be competitive in Extended. By discarding some of the elements of Green Machine and going after a more "[Elf and Nail](#)" approach like that used by Sameer Merchant to win the Northwest Regionals, you could have more luck being competitive.

From last week's vote on the Demon Elections of 2004, I know that I definitely favored [Promise of Power](#). Here's how all of your votes broke down:

Which is the Best Demon?		
Promise of Power	2858	33.9%
Reiver Demon	2516	29.8%
Grinning Demon	2232	26.5%
Havoc Demon	832	9.9%
Total	8438	100.0%

Good work on selecting the best candidate! I know I may be biased here, but I'm proud that you all know a good Demon when you see one.

I hope that you all have a fantastic week, and may your games be overrun with insects and Demons!



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Adrian Sullivan](#) archive

© 1995-2005 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.
PRIVACY STATEMENT