Or, How I Learned to Love the Three-Eyed Owl

Originally published at **https://theshufflebus.com/or-how-i-learned-to-love-the-three-eyed-owl/** by **Jerod Leupold**; archived Jan. 9, 2023.

Or, How I Learned to Love the Owl

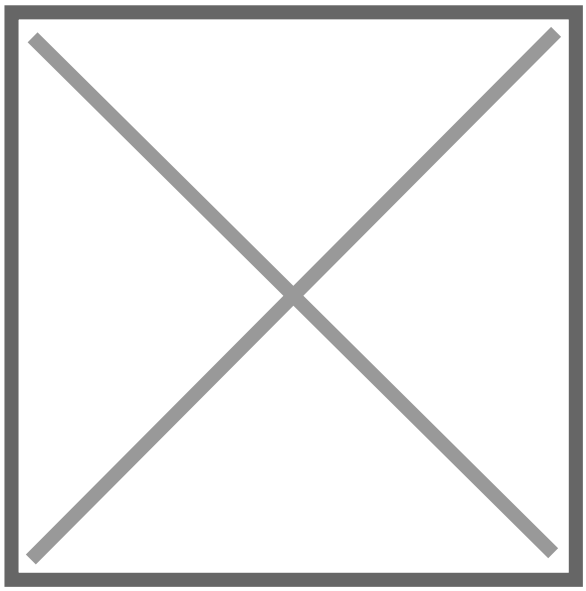
Hard 30 - Meta-tations

Three Eyed Owl is the bane to all players. These feathery conjurations disrupt a first-five, accelerate fatigue late game, and are a general nuisance in between. Players must have a built in plan on how to handle 3EO or face the wrath of a clunky start that spirals into a dismal loss.

Why is Owl so bad for you?

Turn one is more important in Ashes than any other game because players choose their starting hand. This is where all players spend a ton of time constructing just the right balance of battlefield, burn, or mill in a tight ten-die package. If just one of those cards gets pitched by a lousy one-cost conjuration your plans can follow suit.

Think of cards in hand and your dice as resources. On turn one, just based on scarcity, cards in hand are more valuable than dice. If you only start with five cards and one gets taken away from you on your first turn, then that’s bad. Unless you have a way to recur it, you are down 20% of your cards which can be a huge advantage to your opponent. And if it’s not, why were you starting that junk card anyway?



Good Solutions, Bad Solutions

Expending more than one die and/or one card to counteract an owl play feels bad. Because it is. You have to consider that your opponent has only spent one card and one die to get the owl into play. You don’t want to expend any more than that to make an equitable trade. In other words, if you spend three dice or two cards you were much better off just discarding a card.

S Tier Solutions

Built-in abilities that don’t cost a card are the best. Odette is the number one owl hunter in the game. Period. End of Sentence. Aradel almost feels quaint having to spend a die to use her ability compared to Odette but these two Pheonixborn make up the best solutions to the pink menace.

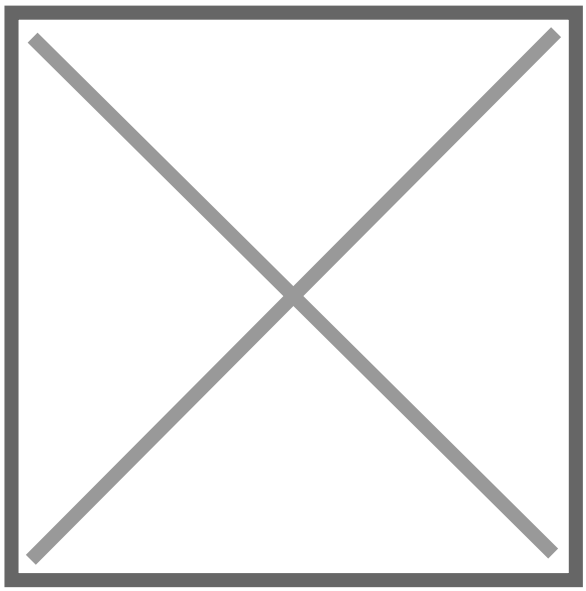
Noah is particularly good here, too. For one die shut down owl, as a side action mind you, on turn one. After turn one, you can wheel his ability towards more dangerous books. I will put Body Inversion into this category too, it matches owl efficiency and is quite good against other targets as well. What ultimately puts it into this lofty realm is it can be repeated every turn.

Odette - Phoenixborn
Aradel - Phoenixborn
Noah - Phoenixborn
Body Inversion - Ready Spell

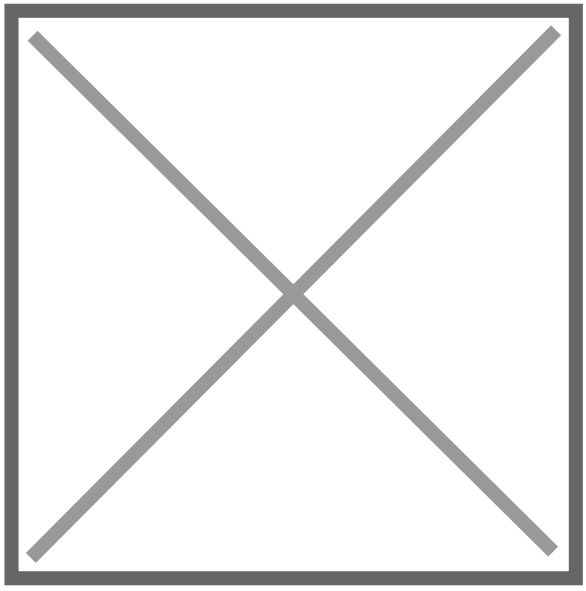
Good Tier Solutions

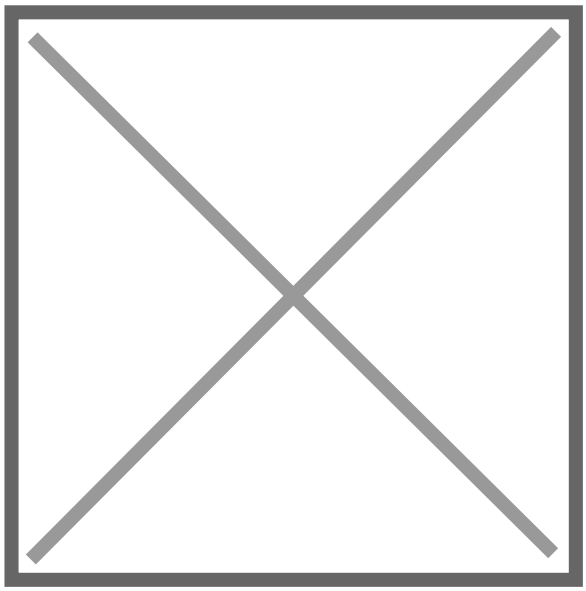
This group encompasses anything that doesn’t cost two dice without further ability. And there are a ton including; more removal options, exhaustion, and outright avoiding the problem.

Removal Options



Law of Domination - Ready Spell





Chained Creations is often overlooked as a good choice because it costs two. I think it’s great AND if you run a little damage in your deck it can knock off bears for an extended period later on too. Owls normally get left on an island at the beginning of a game. So a well-timed Law of Domination can do the trick most times too.

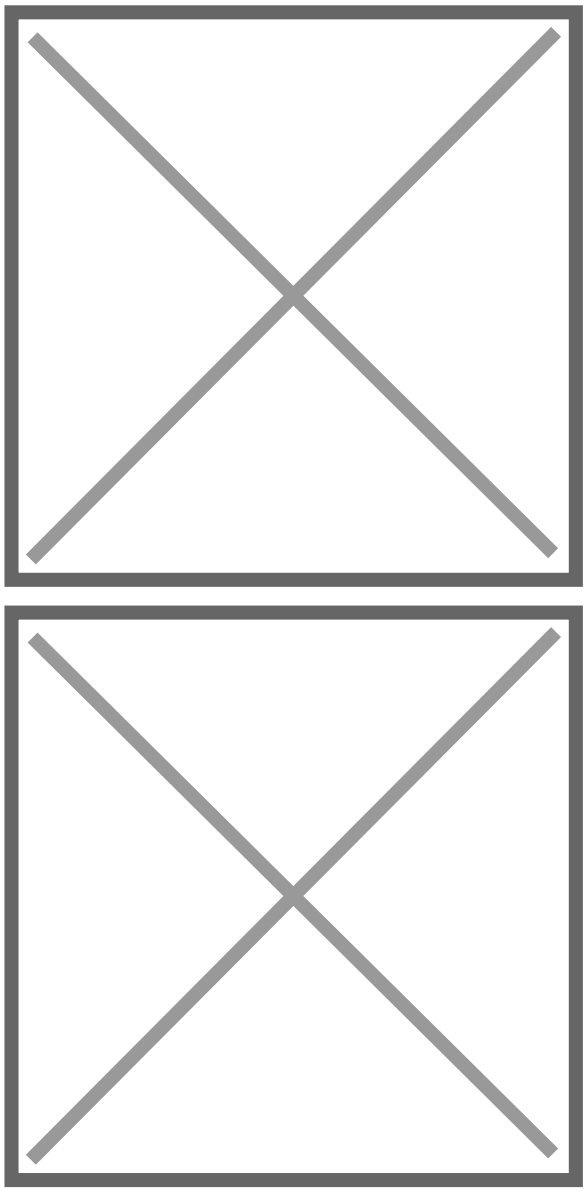
Don’t forget things with stalk love eating owls for lunch. Winged Lioness and Hunter’s Mark are both excellent options. These almost don’t make the Good Tier due to you needing to go first to make the biggest impact.

Editors Note: Ice Trap is also an reasonably good answer outside of divine.

Exhausting Options

Tiring out the feathery foe is a good pivot for turn one. My favorite is light bearer. Nothing more hilarious than having a bird ineffectually thrown in your pheonixborn’s face. You can choose to kill it off later if you have the battlefield actions. It’s main weapon, Memory Drain, is neutralized.

Other cards worth mentioning are Astrea and until I was writing this article Rose Fire Dancer didn’t occur to me as a good option. It falls under the bad list for costing two dice and one card, which isn’t too bad. But, a 3/1 really needs to be dealt with by next turn or it becomes a problem causing your opponent to spend at least one Frog die or one attack action.



Rose Fire Dancer - Ally

Protect Your Hand Option

Acknowledging that owl exists as a super popular card is really the first part of your defense. Understanding how it affects gameplay is the second part. Realizing that owl isn’t an issue if you simply DRAW A CARD to protect your first five is transcendent for some players. It was for me.

Swift Messenger, Abundance, Summon Ash Spirit, Summon Squall Spirit, Namine, and Saria are all excellent answers. Orrick is darn near owl proof with how much card draw he generates.

Recursion works exactly the same way as drawing a card in this instance. If you have an ally in your first five let it hit the discard pile if you are running ceremony dice or Xander.

Reorganizing the first five to spend a sympathy die to draw a card that is simply going to be discarded feels bad. But, it is way better than having a cohesive plan completely blow up in your face.

Acceptance Tier - Or, How I Learned to Love the Owl

Even with all of these options available sometimes your deck is just vulnerable to memory drain. If that is the case at least have a plan for it. One of my favorite decks right now is a first four that uses nine dice. And a fifth card that might be ok if I don’t want to use my pheonixborn’s ability. I have accepted if it gets hit by Memory Drain, fine.

Know which card is the least detrimental to your first five. Even if a card gets ditched that means you have dice leftover. Make sure you use them. Most dice can still provide value during the first turn even if you have to meditate to get the power side.

Just remember, before the game even begins if you see charm dice, get ready for owl hunting season. Heyo and GL!

About the Author

Jerod Leupold has been an avid gamer and advocate for over 30 years. He cut his teeth on the business side by founding and running Critical Hit Games in Iowa City for eight years before selling to excellent stewards. Now that he has time to take things like vacations he amuses himself by using his English degree and journalism background talking about game theory. He has been published under the Gamenomicon franchise for Party First RPG adventures and sourcebooks. As well as several articles about A Game of Thrones CCG and LCG back in the day. While he’s never hoisted a grand champion trophy he has been an innovator and bride’s maid an innumerable number of times.

Revision #1
Created 2023-01-09 20:45:38 UTC by Skaak
Updated 2023-06-21 20:28:18 UTC by Skaak