Probabilistic Analysis of Creature Selection: *Winding Way* and *Lead the Stampede*

A Pauper Format Case Study in Magic: The Gathering

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Abstract

We present a probabilistic framework for analyzing creature selection effects in *Magic: The Gathering*, focusing on *Winding Way* and *Lead the Stampede*. Using hypergeometric distributions, we derive exact expressions for the probability of revealing specific numbers of creatures under both complete and incomplete information. Our analysis provides strategic guidance for deck construction and in-game decision-making, quantifying the expected value of these card selection tools across varying deck compositions and game states.

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1 Introduction

Creature-based strategies in *Magic: The Gathering* rely on consistent access to threats throughout the game. Two prominent card selection effects—*Winding Way* and *Lead the Stampede*—serve this strategic role by digging multiple cards deep into the library to find creatures. Although both cards are functionally similar, their subtle differences in the number of cards examined create distinct probabilistic profiles that deserve formal analysis. In what follows, the term *creatures* is used as shorthand for *creature cards* in non-battlefield zones.

Assuming that "creatures" is chosen, *Winding Way* looks at the top four cards of the library and puts all creature cards among them into the player's hand. *Lead the Stampede* examines five cards instead, offering an additional opportunity to find creatures at the cost of one additional mana. Understanding the probability distributions governing these effects is essential for optimal deck construction, mulligan decisions, and in-game sequencing.

In this work, we model creature selection as a hypergeometric sampling problem over a finite deck containing creatures and non-creatures. We derive closed-form expressions for the probability mass function describing the number of creatures revealed under both complete information (known hand composition) and incomplete information (observable features only). Our framework accounts for the dynamic deck state during gameplay, incorporating visible creatures on the battlefield, in the graveyard, and in hand.

The analysis proceeds in two informational regimes: the *complete information* case, relevant to the player resolving the spell who knows their hand composition; and the *incomplete information* case, where only publicly observable information is available. The latter perspective is particularly relevant to opponents attempting to anticipate the impact of these selection effects.

By quantifying the expected number of creatures drawn and the probability distributions across different deck configurations, we provide actionable insights for strategic play and deck optimization in creature-focused strategies.

2 Theoretical Framework

We model the deck as a finite population consisting of two classes of cards: creatures, which are relevant for the selection effects studied, and non-creatures (lands, instants, sorceries, and other card types). In the following, we introduce the notation used throughout this work.

We define the following constants:

- C as the total number of creatures in the decklist (hidden information);
- N as the total number of non-creatures in the decklist (hidden information).

We define a card as *visible* if it is in a public zone (on the battlefield, in the graveyard, on the stack, in exile, etc.). At any given snapshot of the game, we define the following variables:

- C_{vis} as the number of visible creatures (public information);

- N_{vis} as the number of visible non-creatures (public information);
- d as the number of cards remaining in the library (public information);
- h as the number of cards in hand (public information);
- c as the number of creatures in hand (hidden information).

We observe that, at a given snapshot of the game, the number of cards in the library can be decomposed as

$$d = C - C_{\text{vis}} + N - N_{\text{vis}} - h.$$

The number of creatures remaining in the library, which will be the population from which our selection effects sample, is

$$C_{\text{lib}} = C - C_{\text{vis}} - c.$$

Similarly, the number of non-creatures remaining in the library is

$$N_{\text{lib}} = N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - c) = d - C_{\text{lib}}.$$

These expressions describe the true, pilot-side composition of the library. However, to keep the formulas directly actionable during play, we will avoid using the "lib" notation explicitly in what follows. Instead, all probability formulas will be expressed in terms of visible cards only, so that both players can evaluate the corresponding quantities from the publicly available game state.

3 Probability Distribution for *Winding Way*

3.1 Complete Information Case

Winding Way instructs the player to look at the top four cards of their library and put all creature cards among them into their hand. The number of creatures revealed follows a hypergeometric distribution, since we are sampling without replacement from a finite population of known composition. The complete information case provides precise probabilistic assessments for the player casting *Winding Way*, who has full knowledge of their hand composition. This allows for exact calculation of both the probability distribution and expected value, enabling optimal decision-making regarding when to cast the spell.

3.1.1 Probability Distribution Function

Let X denote the random variable representing the number of creatures among the four cards revealed by *Winding Way*. Given complete information about the hand composition (and thus knowing c, the number of creatures in hand), we have

$$X \sim \text{Hypergeometric}(C - C_{\text{vis}} - c,\ N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - c),\ 4),$$

where the parameters represent, respectively, the number of creatures in the library, the number of non-creatures in the library, and the sample size. Accordingly, the probability of revealing exactly k creatures is

$$\boxed{\mathbb{P}(X = k \mid c) = \frac{\binom{C - C_{\text{vis}} - c}{k}\binom{N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - c)}{4 - k}}{\binom{d}{4}}, \qquad \text{for } k \in \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4\}.}$$

This formula captures the fundamental probabilistic structure: we choose k creatures from the $C - C_{\text{vis}} - c$ creatures remaining in the library, and $4 - k$ non-creatures from the $N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - c)$ non-creatures remaining, divided by the total number of ways to choose 4 cards from the d cards in the library. Note that the expression is valid when $0 \leq k \leq \min(4, C - C_{\text{vis}} - c)$ and $0 \leq 4 - k \leq N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - c)$.

3.1.2 Expected Value

The expected number of creatures revealed by *Winding Way*, given knowledge of the hand composition, is obtained from the expectation of the hypergeometric distribution:

$$\boxed{\mathbb{E}[X \mid c] = 4 \cdot \frac{C - C_{\text{vis}} - c}{d}}$$

This expectation is linear in the proportion of creatures remaining in the library, scaled by the number of cards examined (four in this case). For example, if half the remaining library consists of creatures, *Winding Way* is expected to reveal two creatures on average.

3.2 Incomplete Information Case

When making probabilistic assessments without hand knowledge, the number of creatures in hand c is unknown. The incomplete information case is particularly relevant for opponents attempting to anticipate the spell's impact or for strategic planning when hand composition is uncertain.

3.2.1 Probability Distribution Function

To obtain the probability distribution of the number of creatures revealed, we proceed by averaging over all possible hand compositions, using the Law of Total Probability:

$$\mathbb{P}(X = k) = \sum_{i=0}^{h} \mathbb{P}(X = k \mid c = i) \cdot \mathbb{P}(c = i),$$

where

$$\mathbb{P}(X = k \mid c = i) = \frac{\binom{C - C_{\text{vis}} - i}{k}\binom{N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - i)}{4 - k}}{\binom{d}{4}}$$

and

$$\mathbb{P}(c=i)=\frac{\binom{C-C_{\text{vis}}}{i}\binom{N-N_{\text{vis}}}{h-i}}{\binom{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}}{h}}.$$

Substituting these expressions:

$$\boxed{\mathbb{P}(X=k)=\frac{\sum_{i=0}^{h}\binom{C-C_{\text{vis}}-i}{k}\binom{N-N_{\text{vis}}-(h-i)}{4-k}\binom{C-C_{\text{vis}}}{i}\binom{N-N_{\text{vis}}}{h-i}}{\binom{d}{4}\binom{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}}{h}}}$$

This summation can be evaluated numerically for specific game states, providing the full probability distribution for decision-making purposes.

3.2.2 Expected Value

The expected number of creatures in the incomplete information case requires further investigation. We model c as a hypergeometric random variable

$$c\sim \text{Hypergeometric}(C-C_{\text{vis}},N-N_{\text{vis}},h)$$

whose expected value is

$$\mathbb{E}[c]=h\cdot\frac{C-C_{\text{vis}}}{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}}.$$

Taking expectations over all possible hand compositions, the expected number of creatures revealed by *Winding Way* under incomplete information is

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbb{E}[X]&=\mathbb{E}[\mathbb{E}[X\mid c]]=\mathbb{E}\left[4\cdot\frac{C-C_{\text{vis}}-c}{d}\right]\\&=4\cdot\frac{C-C_{\text{vis}}-\mathbb{E}[c]}{d}=4\cdot\frac{C-C_{\text{vis}}-h\cdot\frac{C-C_{\text{vis}}}{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}}}{d}.\end{aligned}$$

Simplifying the numerator by factoring:

$$C-C_{\text{vis}}-h\cdot\frac{C-C_{\text{vis}}}{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}}=(C-C_{\text{vis}})\left(1-\frac{h}{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}}\right),$$

which yields

$$(C-C_{\text{vis}})\cdot\frac{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}-h}{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}}=(C-C_{\text{vis}})\cdot\frac{d}{C-C_{\text{vis}}+N-N_{\text{vis}}}.$$

Therefore, the expected number of creatures simplifies remarkably:

$$\boxed{\mathbb{E}[X] = 4 \cdot \frac{C - C_{\text{vis}}}{C - C_{\text{vis}} + N - N_{\text{vis}}}}$$

The expected value of *Winding Way* is *independent of the hand size h*, depending solely on the ratio of creatures to non-creatures among cards not yet seen, regardless of how many cards have been drawn.

3.3 Numerical Example: Mid-Game *Winding Way*

Consider a typical scenario in a creature-heavy deck. Suppose that the deck contains $C = 38$ creatures and $N = 22$ non-creatures (a 60-card deck). At a given snapshot of the game, with *Winding Way* on the stack, 5 creatures and 3 non-creatures are visible, and the player has $h = 4$ cards in hand.

At this snapshot:

- $C_{\text{vis}} = 5$ (visible creatures)
- $N_{\text{vis}} = 3$ (visible non-creatures)
- $h = 4$ (cards in hand)
- $d = 60 - 8 - 4 = 48$ (cards remaining in library)

Expected Value Under Complete Information

If the player knows exactly how many creatures are in hand, e.g., $c = 2$, the expected value is

$$\mathbb{E}[X] = h \cdot \frac{C - C_{\text{vis}} - c}{C - C_{\text{vis}} + N - N_{\text{vis}} - h} = 4 \cdot \frac{33 - 2}{52 - 4} = 4 \cdot \frac{31}{48} \approx 2.58.$$

Expected Value Under Incomplete Information

Assuming only public knowledge of visible cards, the expected number of creatures revealed is

$$\mathbb{E}[X] = h \cdot \frac{C - C_{\text{vis}}}{C - C_{\text{vis}} + N - N_{\text{vis}}} = 4 \cdot \frac{38 - 5}{38 - 5 + 22 - 3} = 4 \cdot \frac{33}{52} \approx 2.54.$$

Comparison

The expected value under complete information (≈ 2.58) is slightly higher than under incomplete information (≈ 2.54), showing that knowledge of hand composition marginally improves prediction accuracy. Overall, the difference is small due to high creature density and moderate hand size, confirming that *Winding Way* provides consistently reliable value in both scenarios.

Table 1 reports the probability distributions under both information regimes.

Creatures Revealed (k)	Complete Info	Incomplete Info	Difference
0	1.22%	1.43%	-0.21%
1	10.83%	11.81%	-0.98%
2	32.50%	33.35%	-0.85%
3	39.27%	38.29%	0.98%
4	16.17%	15.11%	1.06%

Table 1: Probability distribution for *Winding Way* revealing k creatures under complete and incomplete information. The last column shows the difference (Complete - Incomplete).

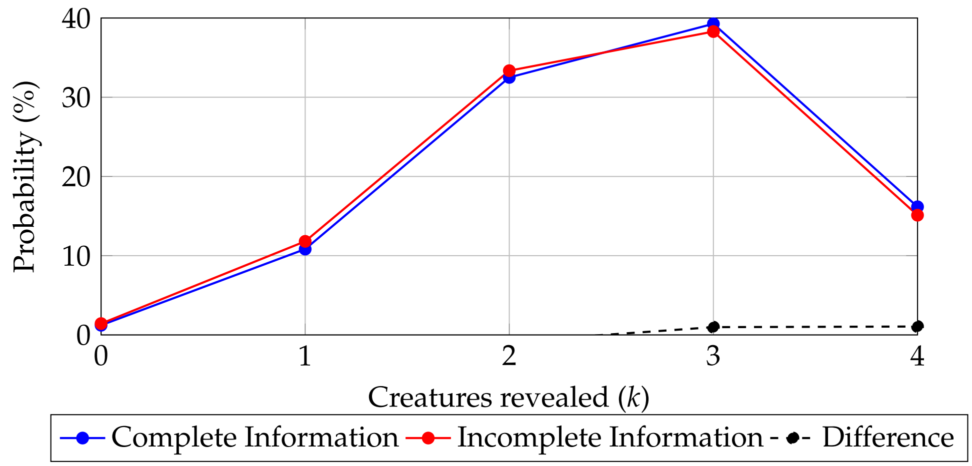

Figure 1: Probability distribution of the number of creatures revealed by *Winding Way* under complete and incomplete information, including the pointwise difference (Complete − Incomplete).

The distribution peaks at 3 creatures in both cases. The probability of revealing at least 3 creatures is higher under complete information ($39.27\% + 16.17\% = 55.44\%$) than under incomplete information ($38.29\% + 15.11\% = 53.40\%$). Similarly, the probability of revealing at least 2 creatures is 87.94% (complete) versus 86.75% (incomplete), confirming that *Winding Way* continues to provide strong card advantage in both scenarios.

Sensitivity to Deck Composition

The expected number of creatures revealed scales approximately linearly with deck creature density. Table 2 shows expected yields and probabilities of revealing at least 2 creatures as the total number of creatures varies, for both complete and incomplete information.

Creatures in Deck (C)	Expected (Complete Info)	Expected (Incomplete Info)	$\mathbb{P}(X \geq 2)$ (Complete Info)	$\mathbb{P}(X \geq 2)$ (Incomplete Info)
36	2.42	2.38	83.57%	82.56%
37	2.50	2.46	85.85%	84.74%
38	2.58	2.54	87.94%	86.76%
39	2.67	2.62	89.86%	88.62%
40	2.75	2.69	91.58%	90.33%

Table 2: Expected number of creatures revealed by *Winding Way* together with probabilities of revealing at least 2 creatures as a function of total creature count, for both complete and incomplete information (5 visible creatures, 3 visible non-creatures, $h = 4$, $d = 48$). Results computed with $c = 2$ for the complete-information case.

Each additional creature in the deck increases the expected yield by approximately 0.07 under incomplete information and by about 0.08 under complete information. The probability of revealing at least two creatures increases by roughly 1.2 percentage points in the incomplete-information case and by about 1.6 points under complete information.

4 Probability Distribution for *Lead the Stampede*

4.1 Complete Information Case

Lead the Stampede functions substantially identically to *Winding Way* except that it examines five cards instead of four. This seemingly minor difference creates a measurably superior probability distribution, as we will demonstrate. The complete information case provides the player with precise probabilistic assessments when they have full knowledge of their hand composition.

4.1.1 Probability Distribution Function

Let Y denote the random variable representing the number of creatures among the five cards revealed by *Lead the Stampede*. Given complete information about the hand composition, we have

$$Y \sim \text{Hypergeometric}(C - C_{\text{vis}} - c,\, N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - c),\, 5),$$

where the parameters represent, respectively, the number of creatures in the library, the number of non-creatures in the library, and the sample size (now 5 instead of 4). The probability of revealing exactly k creatures is

$$\boxed{\mathbb{P}(Y = k \mid c) = \frac{\binom{C - C_{\text{vis}} - c}{k}\binom{N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - c)}{5 - k}}{\binom{d}{5}}, \qquad \text{for } k \in \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5\}.}$$

The structure mirrors that of *Winding Way*, with the sample size increased from 4 to 5. The expression is valid when $0 \leq k \leq \min(5, C - C_{\text{vis}} - c)$ and $0 \leq 5 - k \leq N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - c)$.

4.1.2 Expected Value

The expected number of creatures revealed by *Lead the Stampede*, given knowledge of the hand composition, is

$$\boxed{\mathbb{E}[Y \mid c] = 5 \cdot \frac{C - C_{\text{vis}} - c}{d}}$$

Compared to *Winding Way*, *Lead the Stampede* provides exactly $\frac{5}{4} = 1.25$ times the expected creature count, directly proportional to the additional card examined.

4.2 Incomplete Information Case

From the opponent's perspective or under uncertainty about hand composition, we derive the probability distribution and expected value following the same methodology as for *Winding Way*.

4.2.1 Probability Distribution Function

Using the Law of Total Probability and averaging over all possible hand compositions:

$$\boxed{\mathbb{P}(Y = k) = \frac{\sum_{i=0}^{h} \binom{C - C_{\text{vis}} - i}{k} \binom{N - N_{\text{vis}} - (h - i)}{5 - k} \binom{C - C_{\text{vis}}}{i} \binom{N - N_{\text{vis}}}{h - i}}{\binom{d}{5} \binom{C - C_{\text{vis}} + N - N_{\text{vis}}}{h}}}$$

This expression can be evaluated numerically for specific game states to obtain the complete probability distribution.

4.2.2 Expected Value

Following the derivation for *Winding Way*, the expected number of creatures revealed under incomplete information is

$$\boxed{\mathbb{E}[Y] = 5 \cdot \frac{C - C_{\text{vis}}}{C - C_{\text{vis}} + N - N_{\text{vis}}}}$$

This expectation is also *independent of hand size h*, depending only on the proportion of unseen creatures. The relationship between the two effects is simply:

$$\mathbb{E}[Y] = \frac{5}{4}\mathbb{E}[X].$$

For a deck with 63% creature density among unseen cards (typical of creature-heavy decks), *Winding Way* expects to reveal 2.5 creatures while *Lead the Stampede* expects 3.2 creatures: a 0.7 creature advantage.

4.3 Numerical Example: Mid-Game *Lead the Stampede*

We assume to be in the same scenario as for *Winding Way* (38 creatures in deck, 5 visible creatures, 3 visible non-creatures, $h = 4$ cards in hand, $d = 48$ cards in library).

Expected Value Under Complete Information

If the player knows exactly $c = 2$ creatures are in hand, the expected value is

$$\mathbb{E}[Y] = 5 \cdot \frac{C - C_{\text{vis}} - c}{d} = 5 \cdot \frac{33 - 2}{48} = 5 \cdot \frac{31}{48} \approx 3.23.$$

Expected Value Under Incomplete Information

Assuming only public knowledge of visible cards, the expected number of creatures revealed is

$$\mathbb{E}[Y] = 5 \cdot \frac{C - C_{\text{vis}}}{C - C_{\text{vis}} + N - N_{\text{vis}}} = 5 \cdot \frac{33}{52} \approx 3.17.$$

Comparison

As with *Winding Way*, the expected value under complete information (≈ 3.23) is slightly higher than under incomplete information (≈ 3.17), maintaining the same pattern observed previously. The proportional relationship $\mathbb{E}[Y] = \frac{5}{4}\mathbb{E}[X]$ holds in both cases: $3.23 \approx \frac{5}{4} \cdot 2.58$ and $3.17 \approx \frac{5}{4} \cdot 2.54$.

Table 3 reports the probability distributions under both information regimes.

Creatures Revealed (k)	**Complete Info**	**Incomplete Info**	**Difference**
0	0.36%	0.45%	-0.09%
1	4.31%	4.92%	-0.61%
2	18.47%	19.69%	-1.22%
3	35.70%	35.90%	-0.20%
4	31.24%	29.92%	1.32%
5	9.92%	9.13%	0.79%

Table 3: Probability distribution for *Lead the Stampede* revealing k creatures under complete and incomplete information. The last column shows the difference (Complete - Incomplete).

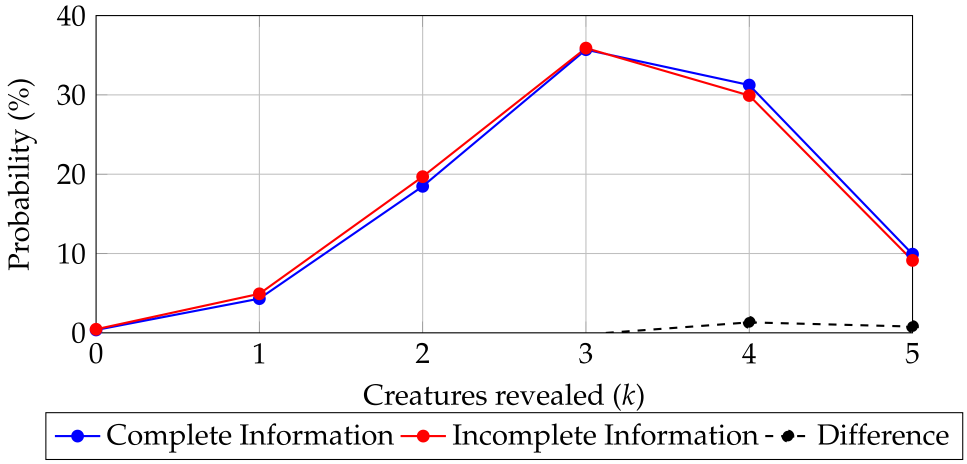

Figure 2: Probability distribution for *Lead the Stampede* revealing k creatures under complete and incomplete information, including the pointwise difference (Complete − Incomplete).

The distribution peaks at 3 creatures in both cases, consistent with the expected value of approximately 3.2. The probability of revealing at least 3 creatures is $35.70\% + 31.24\% + 9.92\% = 76.86\%$ (complete) versus $35.90\% + 29.92\% + 9.13\% = 74.95\%$ (incomplete). The probability of revealing at least 2 creatures is 84.33% (complete) versus 74.95% (incomplete), demonstrating the strong and consistent performance of *Lead the Stampede* across both information regimes.

Sensitivity to Deck Composition

Table 4 shows how the expected yield and key probability thresholds vary with total creature count.

Creatures in Deck (C)	**Expected (Complete Info)**	**Expected (Incomplete Info)**	$\mathbb{P}(Y \geq 2)$ **(Complete Info)**	$\mathbb{P}(Y \geq 2)$ **(Incomplete Info)**
36	3.02	2.98	92.76%	92.08%
37	3.12	3.08	94.14%	93.44%
38	3.23	3.17	95.33%	94.63%
39	3.33	3.27	96.34%	95.67%
40	3.44	3.37	97.19%	96.56%

Table 4: Expected number of creatures revealed by *Lead the Stampede* together with probabilities of revealing at least 2 creatures as a function of total creature count, for both complete and incomplete information (5 visible creatures, 3 visible non-creatures, $h = 4$, $d = 48$). Calculations use $c = 2$ for the complete-information case.

Each additional creature in the deck increases the expected yield by roughly 0.10 under incomplete information and slightly more under complete information, while $\mathbb{P}(Y \geq 2)$ rises by approximately 1.3 percentage points (incomplete) versus 1.4 points (complete). This pattern mirrors that observed for *Winding Way*, with all values scaled proportionally by the factor $\frac{5}{4}$.

Comparative Analysis Under Incomplete Information

Table 5 directly compares *Winding Way* and *Lead the Stampede* across various creature densities, using the same game state parameters (5 visible creatures, 3 visible non-creatures, $h = 4$, $d = 48$), under the incomplete information regime.

Creatures (C)	**Expected Creatures**		$\mathbb{P}(k \geq 2)$		**Advantage**
	Winding Way	*Lead the Stampede*	*Winding Way*	*Lead the Stampede*	
36	2.38	2.98	82.56%	92.08%	+9.52%
37	2.46	3.08	84.74%	93.44%	+8.70%
38	2.54	3.17	86.76%	94.63%	+7.87%
39	2.62	3.27	88.62%	95.67%	+7.05%
40	2.69	3.37	90.33%	96.56%	+6.23%

Table 5: Comparative analysis of *Winding Way* versus *Lead the Stampede* under incomplete information (5 visible creatures, 3 visible non-creatures, $h = 4$, $d = 48$).

The advantage column shows the absolute percentage point increase in the probability of revealing at least 2 creatures when using *Lead the Stampede* instead of *Winding Way*. Across the range of creature densities studied, this advantage remains substantial at 6.2–9.5 percentage points, indicating a consistent improvement in the reliability of revealing multiple creatures.

Table 6 extends the comparison to include higher probability thresholds.

Creatures (C)	$\mathbb{P}(k \geq 3)$		**Advantage**	$\mathbb{P}(k \geq 4)$		**Advantage**
	Winding Way	*Lead the Stampede*		*Winding Way*	*Lead the Stampede*	
36	46.49%	68.28%	+21.79%	11.62%	31.96%	+20.34%
37	49.93%	71.68%	+21.75%	13.28%	35.42%	+22.14%
38	53.41%	74.95%	+21.54%	15.11%	39.05%	+23.94%
39	56.92%	78.05%	+21.13%	17.13%	42.83%	+25.70%
40	60.44%	80.99%	+20.55%	19.34%	46.74%	+27.40%

Table 6: Extended comparison focusing on higher thresholds under incomplete information (5 visible creatures, 3 visible non-creatures, $h = 4$, $d = 48$). Advantage columns show the absolute percentage point improvement of *Lead the Stampede* over *Winding Way*.

For the threshold of at least 3 creatures, *Lead the Stampede* provides an absolute advantage of roughly 20.5–21.8 percentage points over *Winding Way*, corresponding to a relative improvement of about 35–40%. At the 4+ creature threshold, the advantage grows as creature count increases, ranging from about 20 to 27 percentage points, with *Lead the Stampede* increasingly more likely to reveal four or more creatures than *Winding Way*.

These improvements quantify the trade-off between the higher mana cost of *Lead the Stampede* (three mana vs two) and its increased consistency in generating multiple creatures. For creature-heavy strategies where maximizing creature count matters, the consistently higher probabilities across both thresholds show that *Lead the Stampede* delivers meaningfully stronger performance while maintaining strong reliability.

5 Conclusion

This analysis provides a formal probabilistic comparison of *Winding Way* and *Lead the Stampede*, two of the most influential creature-selection effects in creature-dense *Magic: The Gathering* strategies. By modeling both cards as hypergeometric sampling processes under complete and incomplete information, we obtain exact probability distributions for the number of creatures each card is expected to reveal across realistic deck configurations. The results clarify how information, deck composition, and card depth interact to shape the performance of these selection tools.

Although *Lead the Stampede* costs more mana, its deeper search produces consistently higher probabilities of revealing multiple creatures, particularly at the 3+ and 4+ thresholds. *Winding Way*, while cheaper and more flexible, exhibits greater variance and a slightly higher risk of low-impact outcomes. These quantitative differences translate directly into strategic heuristics that players can apply in both deckbuilding and gameplay.

Game-Relevant Strategic Insights

- **Library creature density is the single most important variable.** Both cards scale directly with the proportion of creatures remaining in the library. High density (around 60% or more) dramatically improves outcomes, while density drops—whether from opening-hand composition or sideboarding—significantly reduce performance.
- **Opponents can predict whether a resolve will be back-breaking.** Since expected value depends only on visible creature counts, opponents can estimate density and adjust play—saving counterspells or interaction for high-impact situations.
- ***Winding Way* whiffs about 1–2%, while *Lead the Stampede* does so only about 0.5%**. Its deeper search makes a 0-creature reveal exceedingly rare, providing greater reliability in removal-heavy or grindy matchups."
- ***Winding Way* has higher variance; *Lead the Stampede* has a higher ceiling.** *Winding Way* clusters around 1–3 creatures with more swingy outcomes, while *Lead the Stampede* produces more 3–4-creature hits. *Winding Way* offers early consistency; *Lead the Stampede* offers superior refueling power.
- **If you need at least two creatures, *Lead the Stampede* is correct by a large margin.** *Lead the Stampede* is substantially more likely to produce 2+ or 3+ creatures. Decks depending on multiple bodies (Elves chains, go-wide synergies) benefit most from this higher floor and ceiling.
- **When you are low on gas, *Lead the Stampede* recovers better.** *Lead the Stampede*'s deeper reach and higher expected value make it the superior option for rebuilding after trades or sweepers, especially in grindy environments.