# A Deep Dive into the Paleozoic Archetype: Strategy, Combos, and Synergies

## Introduction: The Ancient Art of Attrition

The Paleozoic archetype stands as a unique entity within the Yu-Gi-Oh! Trading Card Game. It eschews the modern paradigm of explosive, multi-summon combos in favor of a methodical, trap-centric control strategy. The core identity of the Paleozoic deck is rooted in the "grind game"—a protracted duel where victory is achieved by slowing the game state, generating incremental advantage through recursion, and methodically out-resourcing the opponent.1 This archetype has cultivated a reputation for its high skill ceiling, demanding patience, meticulous resource management, and a profound understanding of game mechanics, particularly chain-building and effect timing.1 Its power is not derived from creating an unbreakable first-turn board, but from its ability to turn an opponent's every move into an opportunity to advance its own game plan. This report will provide a comprehensive analysis of the Paleozoic archetype, dissecting its core components, detailing its fundamental and advanced gameplay sequences, exploring its most potent hybrid builds, and examining its strategic position in competitive play.

## Section 1: The Paleozoic Fossil Record - Core Card Analysis

Understanding the Paleozoic strategy begins with a granular analysis of its individual cards. The archetype is composed almost entirely of Normal Trap cards, which share a common, powerful graveyard effect that forms the engine's foundation. These are supported by a small but crucial suite of Extra Deck monsters that convert the recurring trap monsters into tangible advantage.

### 1.1 The Trap Monsters: Tools of Disruption and Recursion

The defining feature of every main deck Paleozoic Normal Trap is its dual nature. Each card functions first as a standard trap card with a unique disruptive effect. However, their true power is unlocked once they are in the Graveyard.

The Shared Effect: The Heart of the Engine

All main deck Paleozoic traps share a variation of the following text: "Once per Chain, when a Trap Card is activated while this card is in your GY: You can Special Summon this card as a Normal Monster (Aqua/WATER/Level 2/ATK 1200/DEF 0). (This card is NOT treated as a Trap.) If Summoned this way, this card is unaffected by monster effects, also banish it when it leaves the field".3 This effect establishes the central gameplay loop: activating any Normal Trap allows the player to build a board of Level 2 monsters from the Graveyard. A critical aspect of this design is the inherent immunity to monster effects that these summoned creatures possess, making them resilient to many common forms of interaction and removal.3

Card-by-Card Breakdown

While they share a summoning condition, each Paleozoic trap offers a distinct on-field effect, creating a toolbox of answers for various situations.

* **Paleozoic Canadia:** This is the primary monster interaction tool. Its effect targets one face-up monster the opponent controls and changes it to face-down Defense Position.3 This is highly versatile, capable of stopping attacks, disabling continuous effects, and disrupting Extra Deck summons that require face-up monsters as material.
* **Paleozoic Olenoides:** The essential back-row removal for the archetype. It targets and destroys one Spell or Trap Card on the field.4 This is crucial for eliminating problematic floodgates, Field Spells, or an opponent's set traps before they can be activated.
* **Paleozoic Dinomischus:** Considered the archetype's premier removal tool, this card targets one face-up card on the field, and by discarding one card, banishes it.5 Banishment is a powerful form of removal that bypasses destruction protection. The discard cost presents a resource management challenge but also enables potent synergies with cards that benefit from being in the Graveyard.10
* **Paleozoic Marrella:** This is the deck's primary setup and consistency card. Its effect sends one Trap Card from the Deck to the Graveyard.6 While not a direct form of disruption, this effect is arguably the most important, as it enables the deck's most powerful strategies by placing key cards like Transaction Rollback or other Paleozoic traps into the Graveyard to be activated or revived later.2
* **Paleozoic Leanchoilia:** A specialized but powerful resource recovery tool. It targets one banished card and returns it to the Graveyard.12 Its unique ability to interact with face-down banished cards creates an exceptionally strong synergy with draw cards like Pot of Desires, turning the card's high cost into a significant advantage.10
* **Paleozoic Pikaia:** The in-archetype draw engine. It requires the player to discard one "Paleozoic" card to draw two cards.13 This helps to cycle through the deck and load the Graveyard with additional Paleozoic names.
* **Paleozoic Hallucigenia:** A combat-oriented trap that targets a face-up monster and halves its ATK and DEF for the turn.13 While less common in modern competitive builds, it provides another Paleozoic name for consistency and can be useful in specific battle scenarios.

The power of these cards is not in their individual strength, which by modern standards is modest. Instead, their strength emerges from their duality. Each trap represents two distinct resources: an initial disruption and a subsequent monster body. This collective mass and recursive potential allow the deck to generate value from every action.

| Card Name | On-Field Trap Effect | Strategic Application |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Paleozoic Canadia** | Target 1 face-up opponent's monster; change it to face-down Defense Position. | **Monster Disruption:** Interrupts Extra Deck plays, stops attacks, and disables monster effects. |
| **Paleozoic Olenoides** | Target 1 Spell/Trap on the field; destroy it. | **Spell/Trap Removal:** Essential for clearing back-row, floodgates, and Field Spells. |
| **Paleozoic Dinomischus** | Target 1 face-up card; discard 1 card, and if you do, banish it. | **Premier Removal:** Banishes any face-up card, bypassing destruction immunity. Enables Graveyard synergies via its discard cost. |
| **Paleozoic Marrella** | Send 1 Trap from your Deck to the Graveyard. | **Graveyard Setup:** The primary enabler for combos by loading the GY with key cards like Transaction Rollback or other Paleozoics. |
| **Paleozoic Leanchoilia** | Target 1 banished card; return it to the GY. | **Resource Recovery:** Recycles key resources and uniquely interacts with face-down banished cards to synergize with Pot of Desires. |
| **Paleozoic Pikaia** | Discard 1 "Paleozoic" card; draw 2 cards. | **Draw Power:** Provides card advantage and helps fill the Graveyard with more Paleozoic names. |
| **Paleozoic Hallucigenia** | Target 1 face-up monster; its ATK/DEF become half its current ATK/DEF. | **Combat Trick:** Weakens opposing monsters to enable favorable battles or survival. |

### 1.2 The Extra Deck Monsters: Engines of Advantage

The Paleozoic Extra Deck monsters serve to convert the swarm of Level 2 bodies into powerful, recurring sources of advantage. A defining characteristic they share with their main deck counterparts is a built-in immunity to the effects of other monsters, making them exceptionally difficult to remove from the field.7

* **Paleozoic Opabinia:** This Rank 2 Xyz Monster is the archetype's key searcher and enabler. Requiring two Level 2 monsters, it has three critical effects: it is unaffected by other monsters' effects; it allows the player to activate Paleozoic Trap cards from their hand; and, if it has a Trap Card as Xyz Material, it can detach one material to add any "Paleozoic" Trap from the Deck to the hand.15 This card accelerates the deck's strategy immensely, allowing for proactive searching and immediate use of the exact disruptive tool needed for any situation.
* **Paleozoic Anomalocaris:** The archetype's primary boss monster, a Rank 2 Xyz Monster that requires three or more Level 2 monsters. Like Opabinia, it is unaffected by other monsters' effects. Its main power lies in its Quick Effect: once per turn, if it has a Trap as material, it can detach one material to target and destroy one card on the field.7 This provides a repeatable and powerful form of disruption that can control the board over multiple turns.
* **Paleozoic Cambroraster:** A Link-2 monster that requires two "Paleozoic" monsters. It offers protection for set cards by allowing the player to banish it from the field or Graveyard instead of their destruction.6 Its most unique effect allows it to target a set card in any Spell & Trap Zone, send it to the GY, and set a "Paleozoic" Trap directly from the Deck, which can then be activated that same turn.2 This provides a way to toolbox specific answers while also potentially removing an opponent's set card.

## Section 2: Reanimating the Ancients - Core Engine & Combo Lines

The transition from understanding individual cards to mastering the deck lies in comprehending how they interact within chains and sequences. The Paleozoic strategy is not about linear combos but about creating a web of interactions that generate advantage over time.

### 2.1 The Graveyard is Your Field: Mastering the Core Mechanic

The fundamental gameplay loop involves activating a Normal Trap to trigger the summon of a Paleozoic from the Graveyard. For example, a player activates Paleozoic Olenoides as Chain Link 1 to destroy an opponent's Spell. If Paleozoic Canadia is in the Graveyard, its effect can be activated as Chain Link 2. The chain resolves backward: Canadia is Special Summoned to the field, and then Olenoides resolves, destroying its target.

This mechanic, however, has a critical vulnerability stemming from the phrase "Once per Chain." If an opponent activates a card or effect in response to your initial trap activation, they can block the Paleozoic summon. For instance, if you activate Olenoides as Chain Link 1 and your opponent chains a monster's Quick Effect as Chain Link 2, you cannot activate a Paleozoic from your Graveyard as Chain Link 3. The opportunity to chain directly to the trap activation has passed. Exploiting this timing rule is the primary way skilled opponents disrupt the Paleozoic engine.18

### 2.2 Primary Combo Path: The Marella-Rollback Engine

While not a "combo" in the traditional sense, the deck's most powerful and proactive opening sequence involves Paleozoic Marrella and Transaction Rollback. This two-card setup establishes both disruption and a body on board, setting the stage for future plays.2

1. **Turn 1:** The player sets Paleozoic Marrella and another Normal Trap (e.g., Destructive Daruma Karma Cannon) and passes their turn.
2. **Opponent's Turn:** As soon as possible, often during the opponent's Draw or Standby Phase, the player activates the set Paleozoic Marrella. Its effect is used to send Transaction Rollback from the Deck to the Graveyard. Marrella is now also in the Graveyard.
3. **Interaction:** At an opportune moment to disrupt the opponent's plays, the player activates their second set trap (Destructive Daruma Karma Cannon).
4. **Chain Summon:** Assuming the opponent does not respond to the trap's activation, the player can activate the effect of the Paleozoic Marrella in their Graveyard as Chain Link 2, Special Summoning it to the field.
5. **The Payoff:** After the chain resolves, the player has a Level 2 monster on the field. They can then activate the Graveyard effect of Transaction Rollback by paying half their Life Points and banishing it. This allows them to copy the effect of the Destructive Daruma Karma Cannon they just used, effectively doubling up on a powerful piece of disruption.2

This sequence demonstrates how the deck proactively engineers its Graveyard to enable reactive plays. It doesn't wait for the opponent to act; it prepares its resources ahead of time.

### 2.3 From Traps to Titans: Pathways to the Extra Deck

The recurring summons of Paleozoic monsters serve as the material for powerful Extra Deck plays.

* **Path to Opabinia:** By activating two traps across a turn, a player can summon two Paleozoics from the Graveyard. These can then be overlaid to Xyz Summon Paleozoic Opabinia. Opabinia's effect can then be used to search for the precise Paleozoic trap needed to handle the current board state, continuing the cycle of advantage.15
* **Path to Anomalocaris:** Summoning three Level 2 monsters (a combination of Paleozoics and potentially other monsters like the "Frog" engine) allows for the Xyz Summon of Paleozoic Anomalocaris. This establishes a formidable threat that provides repeatable destruction every turn.7
* **Path to Zeus:** A common and powerful line involves summoning any Rank 2 Xyz monster, such as Paleozoic Opabinia or the generic Sky Cavalry Centaurea. After that monster battles, it can be used in Main Phase 2 to Xyz Summon Divine Arsenal AA-ZEUS - Sky Thunder. Zeus can then use its effect to send all other cards on the field to the Graveyard. Crucially, any Paleozoic monsters on the field will survive this board wipe due to their immunity to monster effects, leaving the player in a dominant position.2

The deck's resource loop is not infinite. The clause "banish it when it leaves the field" on each summoned Paleozoic is a critical limitation.3 This means that effective resource management is paramount. A player must track which Paleozoic names have been used and which remain in the Graveyard, using the minimum number of revivals necessary to achieve their goal and preserving resources for subsequent turns.1

### 2.4 The Paleozoic "End Board": A State of Control

Unlike combo-oriented decks that aim to end on a field of multiple monster-based negations, the Paleozoic "end board" is a dynamic state of control. A strong turn-one board is not defined by the monsters on the field but by the potential they represent. A typical strong position consists of:

* One key Extra Deck monster, such as Paleozoic Opabinia to search for answers or Paleozoic Anomalocaris to provide disruption. In hybrid builds, this could be Toadally Awesome.19
* Two to four set Trap cards, representing multiple points of interaction for the opponent's turn.
* A Graveyard loaded with three or more Paleozoic traps, ready to be summoned as soon as the player activates their own traps.2

The strength of this board lies in its resilience and adaptability. It aims not to prevent the opponent from playing entirely, but to have a cost-effective answer for each of their actions, all while simultaneously building a larger board presence that will eventually overwhelm them.1

## Section 3: Symbiotic Evolution - Hybrid Deck Synergies

The modular nature of the Paleozoic engine allows it to be integrated into numerous other strategies, often forming the backbone of powerful hybrid decks. In these builds, the Paleozoic engine acts as a "service provider," offering a consistent and resilient method of generating Level 2 bodies and trap-based interactions, which the "client" archetype then leverages to achieve its own, more powerful win conditions.

### 3.1 Paleozoic Frogs: The Awesome Alliance

This is the most classic and synergistic pairing for the Paleozoic archetype. The synergy is built on a perfect overlap: the Paleozoic engine summons Level 2 WATER Aqua monsters, and the "Frog" engine—consisting of Swap Frog, Dupe Frog, and Ronintoadin—is also composed of Level 2 WATER Aqua monsters that excel at swarming the field and filling the Graveyard.21

* **The Goal: Toadally Awesome:** The primary objective of this variant is to summon Toadally Awesome as consistently as possible. This Rank 2 monster provides a powerful omni-negate, steals the card it negates, and can recycle itself and other WATER monsters from the Graveyard upon being sent there.19
* **Engine Interaction:** Swap Frog is the key starter, typically used to send Ronintoadin from the Deck to the Graveyard. Ronintoadin can then banish another Frog from the Graveyard to Special Summon itself.19 This provides a self-sustaining source of Level 2 monsters. A common sequence involves activating a trap to summon a Paleozoic from the Graveyard, then Normal Summoning Swap Frog to send Ronintoadin. These two monsters can then be immediately used to Xyz Summon Toadally Awesome.

### 3.2 Paleozoic Eldlich: The Golden Land's Ancients

This hybrid merges two of the game's most prominent trap-based, graveyard-reliant control strategies. The Eldlich engine provides a powerful, recursive boss monster (Eldlich the Golden Lord) and its own suite of disruptive traps, while the Paleozoic engine offers additional bodies for Extra Deck plays and a higher density of traps to ensure effects are always live.10

* **The 60-Card Philosophy:** This variant often utilizes a 60-card deck. This seemingly counterintuitive choice allows the player to run full playsets of both engines without the high risk of drawing multiple copies of cards that are only good in specific situations. It also maximizes the power of cards like That Grass Looks Greener or Needlebug Nest, which can mill dozens of cards and set up both the Paleozoic and Eldlich engines simultaneously.10 In this context, the traditional concept of a "brick" hand is redefined; a hand of five traps can be a perfect starter, as the monsters are effectively contained within them or operate from the Graveyard.10
* **Specific Interactions:** The synergy is deeply intertwined. The discard cost of Paleozoic Dinomischus becomes an advantage when discarding an Eldlixir or Golden Land trap, as their Graveyard effects will then trigger.10 Similarly, Paleozoic Marella can be used to send an Eldlich trap like Eldlixir of Scarlet Sanguine to the Graveyard, which can be banished during the End Phase to set a Golden Land trap from the Deck.10

### 3.3 Paleozoic Runick: The Fountain of Life

This modern hybrid combines the board control of Paleozoics with the hand advantage and alternate win condition of the Runick archetype.

* **Core Synergy:** The various Runick Quick-Play Spells, when activated, are treated as trap activations. This means they can trigger the summoning effects of Paleozoics in the Graveyard, allowing the player to build a board on either player's turn with incredible flexibility.8 In return, the Paleozoic monsters provide defensive bodies and access to the Rank 2 Xyz toolbox, which is crucial as the Runick spells force the player to skip their next Battle Phase.25
* **Divergent Win Conditions:** This build introduces the ability to win by deck-out. Each Runick spell banishes cards from the top of the opponent's deck.25 While the Runick engine depletes the opponent's resources, the Paleozoic engine controls the board and prevents them from winning through combat. The Field Spell Runick Fountain provides immense card advantage by allowing the player to recycle Runick spells and draw multiple cards per turn, ensuring they can out-grind any opponent.25
* **Key Enabler:** Any Runick spell can Special Summon Hugin the Runick Wings from the Extra Deck. Hugin is a Level 2 monster that can search for Runick Fountain, perfectly bridging the two engines by providing a Level 2 body for Xyz plays alongside the summoned Paleozoics.25

## Section 4: Strategic Excavation - Advanced Play and Matchup Analysis

Mastering the Paleozoic archetype requires moving beyond basic sequences and understanding the deeper strategic nuances of resource management and matchup-specific play.

### 4.1 The Grind Game: Mastering Resource Management

Patience is the cornerstone of successful Paleozoic play. The deck is inherently slow, and the primary objective is to survive the opponent's initial onslaught while accumulating resources.1 A common mistake is to activate traps frivolously simply to summon a monster. It is often more prudent to hold key disruption for the most critical moment, even if it means forgoing an immediate summon. A deep understanding of chain-building is also essential. Players must learn to bait out an opponent's responses to non-essential effects before committing to the trap activation that will trigger their key Paleozoic summon, thereby playing around the "Chain Link 2" vulnerability.

### 4.2 Archetypal Strengths and Vulnerabilities

The Paleozoic strategy is naturally well-positioned against decks that are heavily reliant on monster effects to build their board. The constant disruption from traps like Paleozoic Canadia, Paleozoic Dinomischus, and powerful generic options like Ice Dragon's Prison can dismantle combo-heavy strategies piece by piece.1 The inherent immunity of Paleozoic monsters also makes them formidable against decks that rely on monster-based removal and negation.10

However, the archetype has several pronounced weaknesses:

* **Mass Back-row Removal:** The deck's most significant vulnerability is to cards like Harpie's Feather Duster and Lightning Storm. A single resolution of such a card can wipe out a player's entire field of interaction, often leading to an immediate loss.18
* **Graveyard Hate:** As a graveyard-centric strategy, the deck is extremely susceptible to floodgates like Macro Cosmos and Dimension Shifter, which prevent cards from reaching the Graveyard. A well-timed Called by the Grave on a key Paleozoic in the Graveyard can also halt the engine's momentum.20
* **Unaffected Monsters:** Monsters that are untargetable or completely unaffected by card effects, such as Red-Eyes Dark Dragoon or Black Luster Soldier - Soldier of Chaos, can be exceptionally difficult to remove, as most of the deck's primary interaction tools require targeting.10
* **Trap Negation:** Cards like Jinzo or Royal Decree, while rare, completely shut down the deck's primary mechanic and are often an insurmountable obstacle.

## Conclusion: The Enduring Legacy of the Paleozoic

The Paleozoic archetype represents a distinct and enduring philosophy in the Yu-Gi-Oh! TCG. It stands as a testament to an era of game design that prioritized attrition, resource management, and strategic interaction over overwhelming offensive power. The deck's core engine, while simple in concept, is complex in execution, demanding a high level of skill and foresight from its pilot. Its true strength lies not in its individual components but in its emergent properties—resilience, recursion, and unparalleled flexibility. The engine's modularity, allowing it to form the synergistic core of multiple competitive hybrid strategies, ensures its continued relevance. For the dedicated duelist, mastering the Paleozoic archetype is more than learning a deck; it is a lesson in the fundamental skills of the game: timing, patience, and the art of turning every card into a source of compounding advantage.

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