

Animal Rescue: The Video Game

A Submission for Games Without Borders

Overview

Animal Rescue is a mini-game based adventure that covers all seven continents and features endangered animals from around the world. The player acts as their choice of a young man or woman helping a charity called the Wildlife Preservation Society. When they start the game, the WPS is run from an old schoolhouse in the outskirts of Seattle, Washington. Although the few employees are dedicated and proactive, their efforts haven't been enough to raise more than a little cash. With the player's help, the WPS will save their first animal, the Western Snowy Plover. The associated mini-game acts as a tutorial and poses little challenge. This earns the WPS the recognition needed to step up their game, and soon their efforts will expand internationally.

Purpose

The purpose of Animal Rescue is to inform the player about recovery efforts for endangered animals, and to learn more about the animals themselves. By using fun and simple mini-games that are based on real recovery strategies for the particular species, the player becomes motivated to learn more about what they can do to stop extinction of valuable species.

Details of Gameplay

The first mini-game focuses on the Western Snowy Plover. After the player has completed it for the first time, they unlock seven different endangered animals native to North America. The “home screen” at this point is a physical map with an image of each animal marked about where they are currently found in the wild. Right beneath each animal is a “progress bar.” When the player clicks on an animal, the associated mini-game will start, and upon completion, the progress bar will fill slightly. As the player repeats the mini-game, it gets successively harder, progressing from being a cakewalk to eventually becoming quite difficult. At the bottom of the home screen, there is an overall progress bar. This determines when the continent is completed and the player can move on to the next one. The result of this is that while the player can take on extra challenge by striving to fully “complete” each animal, they can continue to progress in the game fairly easily. This system also allows the player to complete more of mini-games they are good at, and not frustrate themselves overmuch with the ones they struggle with. Once a new continent is unlocked, eight new animals for the player to rescue appear, but of course they can return to the old continent and try to complete animals whenever they want, or to simply try and rack up high scores on their favorite mini-games.

Plot

As stated in the “Overview” section, the player is hired at the WPS, or Wildlife Preservation Society. The CEO is Dr. Maya Snow, and your three coworkers are Brad

and Sandy Larson, who are siblings, and Jason Hong. As the WSP expands, it is understood that more employees are hired, but these four are the developed characters in the game. Conversations with these characters are sparked by progress in the game, such as unlocking a new continent, completing an animal, or racking up certain amounts of points overall. Although most of the dialogue will concern the WSP, it will reveal a bit about the characters and allow the player to become attached to them. At one point, the WSP enters a crisis. People have lost interest in preserving animals because of economic troubles. In order to inspire their benefactors once again, the WSP must redouble their efforts and produce visible population growth in the animals they're working on. Although there's no time limit, plot devices like these help motivate the player and create opportunities for conversations with the game's characters. The ultimate goal is to rescue all of the animals and expand the WSP, the progress of which is shown as a building icon in the menu which grows bigger and fancier with each completed continent.

Characters

Dr. Snow – A middle-aged woman who ostensibly acts as CEO of the WSP. Even though that is the title she uses for paperwork, she is just as likely to be out doing fieldwork as any other member. Her bright red hair and blue eyes usually frame a studied frown as she concentrates on a task. Her doctorate is in biochemistry.

Quote: “Saving the kakapo is going to be one of our most challenging projects yet, but with this recovery plan and enough work, it might just happen.”

Brad and Sandy Larson – Twins who lived separately and planned to go different routes in life, but switched to the same career path without realizing it and now grudgingly work under the same roof. Their arguments are enough to make anyone roll their eyes.

Originally they both had dark hair and chocolate eyes, but Sandy died her hair blond so it wouldn't be the same color as Brad's. They're young adults.

Quote: At the same time: "Sounds awesome!" and then glare at each other for copying.

Jason Hong – A man in his thirties who founded the WSP with Dr. Snow. Lacking her stern mentality and the twins' bickering, he acts as the player's mentor in the game. He has an easy smile that belies a strong passion for rectifying what humans have done to animals all over the world.

Quote: "Welcome to the Wildlife Preservation Society. Things can be a little crazy around here, but we all love what we do."

The player – As the newest member of the WSP, you are crucial to helping them rescue animals and earn recognition. You are fresh out of college with a Bachelor's Degree in ornithology. You can choose your name when the game first starts up.

More on Mini-games

The example animal used here is the Western Snowy Plover, although many other animals would be introduced in the final version. In the associated mini-game, the player has to click on litter on the beach as it appears onscreen at an increasingly fast pace to

pick it up. Once clicked, the litter fades away. Failing to pick up a piece of litter fast enough results in a “life” lost, indicated by three stars in the upper-right corner. One disappears every time this happens. If all three stars disappear, the game is failed and the player is returned to the home screen. If the player manages to survive through a minute of the game, they win and the progress bar for the Snowy Plover is filled a little. Every time the player repeats the game, it gets a little faster, meaning litter appears onscreen at higher speeds. Points are awarded for picking up all the litter before the time limit ends. The game illustrates a recovery method for the species because trash left on beaches attracts predators such as raccoons and foxes that eat the bird, which might be explained on a splash screen as the game is loading, or else in the menu.

Extras

To motivate the player to complete animals fully, there are extras in the game. Examples of these include a photo gallery with fast animal facts, artwork of the animals, and profiles with facts and real-world website links for further information. These are shown in the artwork below.

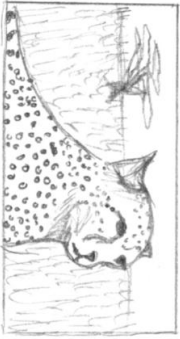
Why it will Work

The design of this game is such that it would not cost very much to produce, with simplistic mini-games. However, with lots of variety and unlockables, it will become fun

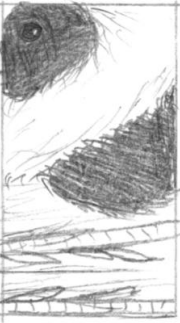
and engaging to the player. Also, when a person has to work to unlock information, they are more likely to read and pay attention to that information.

Photo Gallery

Here is a collection of what you've unlocked so far...



Animal: Cheetah
Weight: 110-140 lbs.
Height: 64-94cm
Habitat: Savanna
Diet: Gazelles, Zebras



Animal: Giant Panda
Weight: 220-250 lbs.
Height: 80cm-1m
Habitat: Bamboo forests
Diet: Bamboo



Animal: ???
Weight: ???
Height: ???
Habitat: ???
Diet: ???



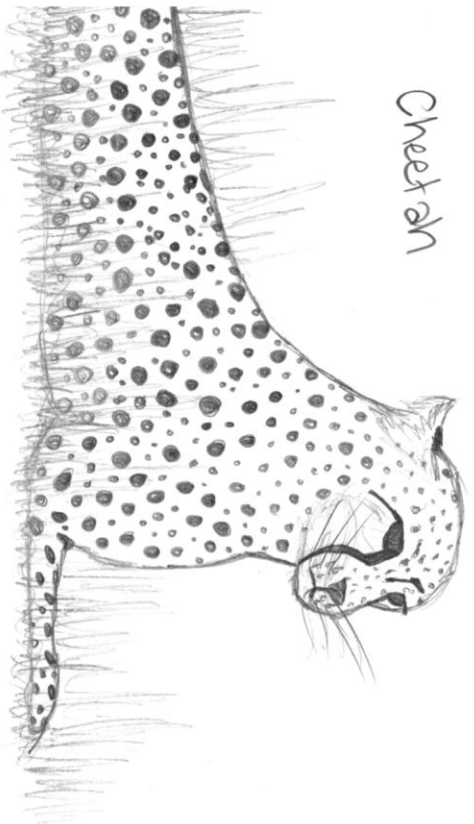
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Diet: ???



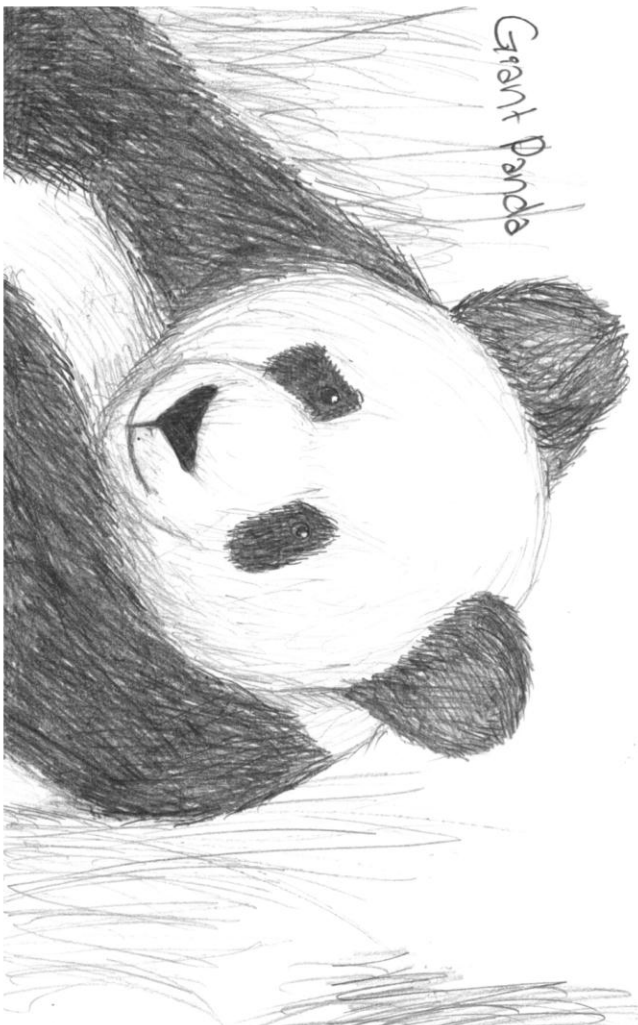
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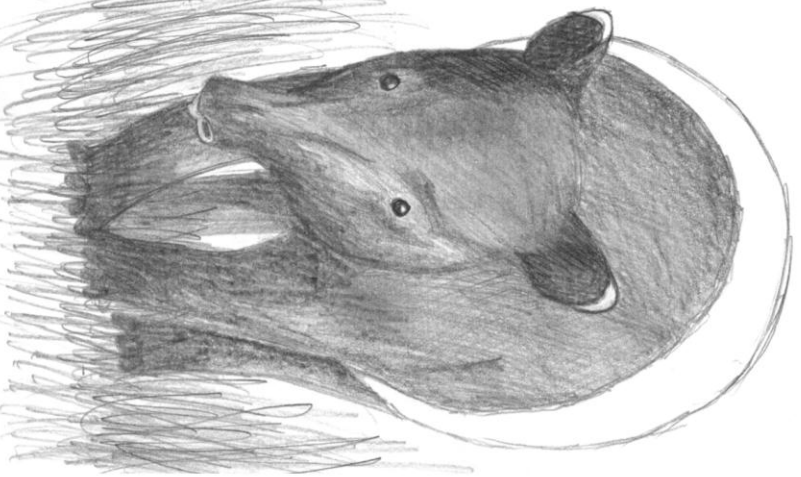
Cheetah



Giant Panda



Malayan Tapir



Profiles

Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrius nivosus*)

This shorebird's sole habitat is along the Pacific Coast of the United States and Latin America. As of 2009, the U.S. population was estimated to be only 2,100 adults. Snowy plover chicks can go out and search for food within hours of hatching. They eat almost exclusively invertebrates found on the beach. You can find out more about these small brown and white birds, including how to help them in real life, at <http://www.westernsnowyplover.com>.



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