



Safari Seekers

Game Design Document

Summary

Safari Seekers is a 3D third-person game with platformer elements. Players have to find as many animals as possible within a time limit. They are given a set of different criteria and have to find an animal that fulfils all of them. When they select the correct animal, they get extra time. When they select the wrong animal, they get a time penalty. After selecting an animal, the players get new criteria and have to search a new animal. This keeps going until they run out of time. The game also gets progressively more difficult based on how many correct selections the player has made.

Design Pillars

- **Realism:** The game should properly instil a sense of realism into the player, allowing them to become immersed in the world. The realism shouldn't be extreme, but the game should help convey to the players that the game world is a breathing world. Plants and trees should be scattered around. Animals should be in their natural living biomes.
- **Education in the gameplay:** Players will be able to test their knowledge of animals through the game. Your success rate in the game goes up a lot if you know something about the animals in the game. Players will be able to review info in the title screen, so they can get better at the knowledge part of the game.
- **Simplicity:** As the game is aimed towards younger children who may or may not have any experience playing video games before, everything should be made as simplistic as possible to allow them to play the game to its fullest without being blocked by confusing controls or difficult sections.

- **No violence:** None of the characters (animals) should have aggressive features, none of the level elements should kill or hurt the player.
- **Freedom to explore:** The player should be able to explore and go wherever they want, every path can be taken from the start of the game. Platforming sections should be designed in such a way that they can be approached from any direction by the player.
- **Time as the only currency:** The game should only use time as a reward or as a punishment. No other currencies can be introduced.

Unique Selling Points

- **Realistic Environments:** The game will feature several environments found in the real world, such as grassland, forests or swamps, and feature animals that would live in those environments in the real world.
- **Teaching and testing about Animals:** This game will be used to help kids apply their knowledge on animals. They will do better at the game if they know more about an animal. The info they forgot will be taught via trial and error, they will be able to see what they did wrong when they select the wrong animal. They can also review the information in the game menu.
- **Open world platforming:** The game will feature platforming challenges in an open level. The player can go wherever they please in the level. This means that the challenges in the game can be approached from any direction.

Essence & Target Experience

The player should constantly feel like they are under time pressure, having to move from one animal to another. The game should feel fast paced and full of action while they are trying to scramble and go to the next animal. They should also feel like there's a small world waiting for them to be explored in the game, full of interesting animals.

Type of Fantasy

The player should feel like they are an explorer exploring a small island. Children always want to explore, but they usually have to listen and stay with their parents. In the game, they can go wherever they please. Every nook and cranny can be explored. They should also be encouraged to do better because of the score they get at the end of the game. This should incentivise them to play again and again.

Target Audience

This game is aimed towards young kids, aged from 8 - 12 years old. It also accommodates children who have not played many video games in their life before, allowing them to not get confused by the controls.

Looking at Bartle's taxonomy of player types, the game aims mostly towards achievers. They will want to get the best score possible. Explorers will also enjoy this game, since they will want to see the entire level and find all of the animals at least once.

Platform

The game will be played on pc via a downloadable. The client is not sure if the players will have access to a mouse, so the game can be played fully with keyboard.

Core Gameplay

Basic gameplay loop

Upon starting a game, players will find themselves in an open world. The world is divided into five different sections, each with a unique biome. Each biome will contain animals that realistically live in within them.

Players will then get notice a list of criteria and a prompt, asking the player to find and select an animal that fits the listed criteria.

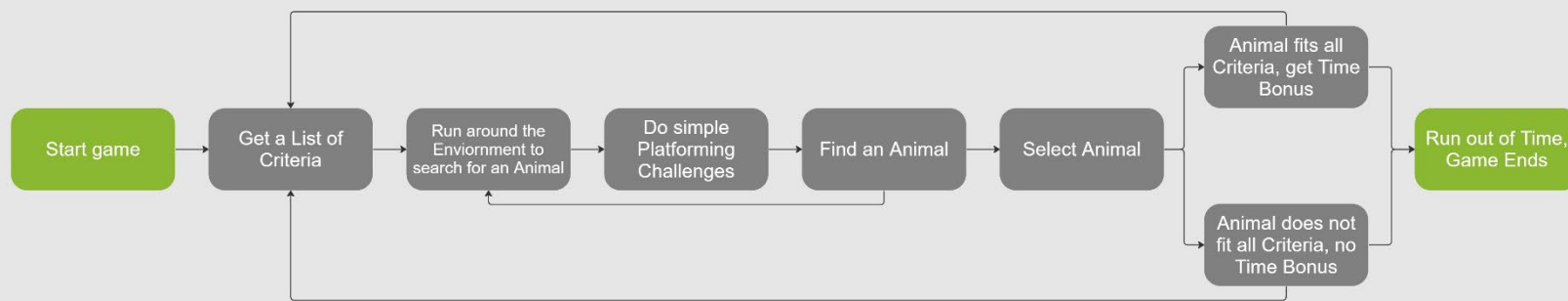
Players will then have to run, jump, and navigate the world to find an animal they believe fits the criteria before a timer reaches zero. During the navigation, players will find small platforming challenges that allow them to traverse the world faster or pick up collectibles that adds time to the timer.

Eventually, players will find an animal that they may believe to fit the criteria. The player will then get close to the animal and select it. After selecting an animal, the game will inform the player what criterion fit the animal. If all the criteria fits, then the player is rewarded with extra time added to the timer. If one or more criterion do not fit, then the player is informed which ones don't fit and also do not get a time bonus.

Players then get a new list of criteria and tasked to find an animal that fits it, with the cycle repeating until the timer reaches 0. As the game goes on, the criteria will get more specific, narrowing down the possible animals that can be correctly chosen.

Goal

The main goal of the game is for the player to survive as long as they can. To do this, players will have to demonstrate some mastery over the game and its simple mechanics, as well as demonstrate knowledge over animals.



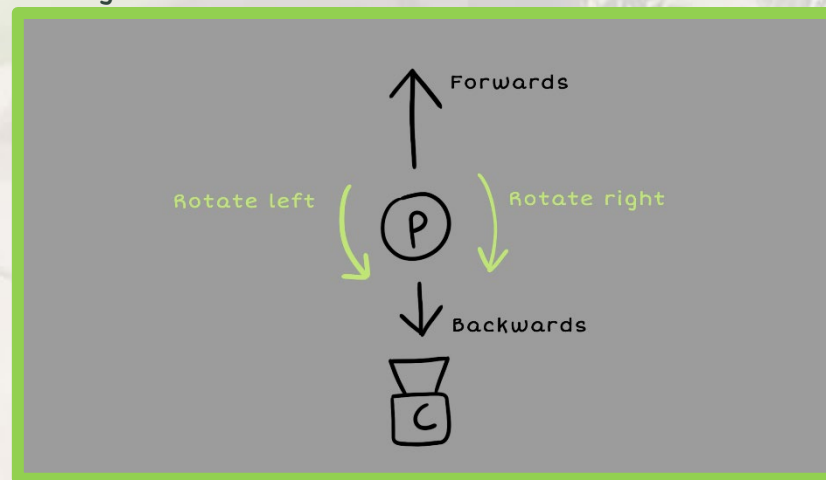
Challenges

The game has two main challenges:

- Figure out what animals fit all of the criteria. Players will naturally encounter animals without needing to actively go searching for them, so the learning aspect comes in with players needing to use their knowledge of animals to see if the animal fits the criteria.
- Simple platforming challenges to make exploring the world more fun.

Character

The character will be able to run and jump. Because the game's target audience is young school children, the game should be easily controllable at any moment in time. The game uses a simplified way to control a 3d character. Pressing the forward and backward keys will move the character in the corresponding direction. Pressing the left and right keys will rotate the character in the corresponding direction.



Furthermore, it won't take long to accelerate the character to full speed when holding the button down, and it will come to a stop almost immediately after releasing the button.

During a jump, the character can still be controlled in the air to make the player feel like they are in control. The character will also jump higher when holding the jump button, and fall down faster when releasing the button. This way, the player can more easily decide when and where to land.

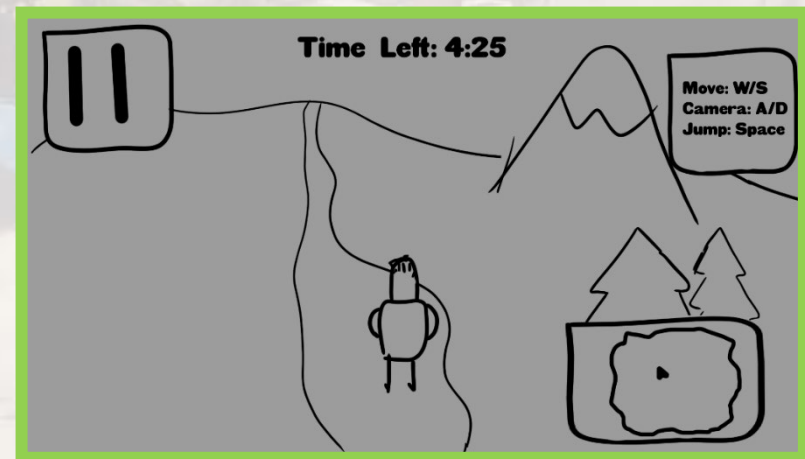
Controls

The game is controlled using the keyboard. Please keep in mind that we will be using a QWERTY keyboard for this example. Controls can always be changed if the target audience has a different keyboard.

- W and S to move forwards and backwards respectively
- A and D to rotate the character
- SPACE to jump
- E to select an animal when the player is close enough
- ESC to Pause Game or Return to Menu/Game

Additionally, players that have a mouse may navigate the menus with it, but players will still be able to navigate menus with just keyboard as well.

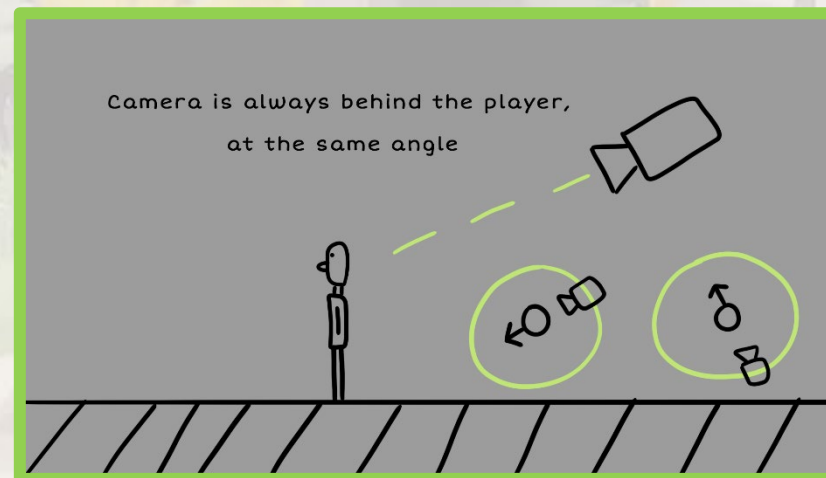
To teach players the controls of the game, there will be a *How to Play* button on the Main Menu, a pop-up that appears when the player is idle for over 10 seconds that reminds players of the control, as well as a button prompt that appears when the player gets close enough to select an animal.



Camera

The original concept for the game used the mouse for camera control, but because of the target audience, this was taken out.

During gameplay, the camera will always be behind the player (at a slight downwards angle). Rotating the player will rotate the camera as well. Thus, the player can easily move left and right by simply rotating the player and walking forward.



Criteria Structure

Upon starting the game or after selecting an animal, players will get a list of criteria that appears on the side of the screen. Each criteria will have a property that the animal must have.

An example of a sample criteria:

Find and Select an animal that...

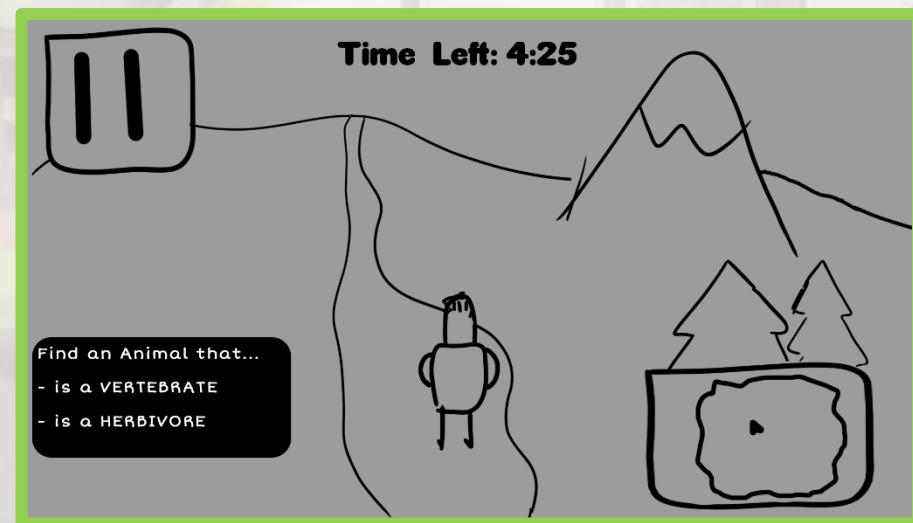
- is a VERTEBRATE.
- is a HERBIVORE.

In this example, the player is tasked with finding an animal that has the listed properties. Players would run around the world, searching for an animal that fits all the criteria.

Upon finding an animal that they believe fits all the criteria, players will go up to the animal and select it, upon which they will be told what criteria fits, or doesn't fit, the selected animal. Afterwards, players will get a new set of criteria.

In the beginning, the criteria will be broad and apply to many animals, but as the game progresses, the criteria will change such that only a select few animals apply to the criteria.

This will create a natural difficulty curve that helps reinforce the learning the knowledge the player has.



The Animals and Biomes

In our world, there will be 12 animals spread across 5 biomes. Here are a list of biomes and animals that can be found in each:

- Grasslands: Rabbit and Giraffe
- Forest: Chimpanzee, Eagle, Parrot, Rabbit, Snake and Tiger
- Mountain: Eagle and Goat
- Swamp: Crocodile, Fish, Snake
- Beach/Ocean: Dolphin, Fish, Octopus

As shown in the Biome list, some animals can appear in multiple biomes. Additionally, animals will spread around frequently enough, so players do not have to actively search for animals, but rather will encounter them naturally through simple exploration of the world.

Within the criteria, players may be tasked to remember certain properties of animals, which include the following:

- Animal Group: Vertebrate or Invertebrate
- Animal Class: Mammal, Bird, Reptile, Amphibian, Fish, or Mollusc
- Reproduction: Oviparous or Viviparous
- Means of Nutrition: Carnivore, Herbivore, or Omnivore
- Physical Features: Walks on Four Legs, Lives on Land, Has Fur/Hair, etc...

Mechanics

While the main game mechanic is centred around finding an animal that fits the criteria, players will face simple platforming challenges that makes navigating the world more fun and

engaging. These platforming challenges should reward players by allowing them to traverse the world more quickly.

- Springs: Push the character in the air when jumping on them.
- Moving platforms: Constantly move between two positions.
- Crumbling platforms: Disappear after the player stands on them for a certain amount of time. They reappear shortly after disappearing.
- Shallow Water: Slows the player down should the player stand in it.

Story & Theme

Characters

The player character is a researcher. Their boss needs to find specific animals to conduct the research. The player is tasked with finding those animals as fast as possible. If they don't find the right animals in time they get fired.

Game world

The game world is a small, yet open world filled with a couple of biomes. The biomes we will use are beach, forest, swamp, grasslands and mountains. The player can freely explore this small world, although they are tasked with finding a certain animal.

Replayability

The game is replayable in a sense that it is a permadeath high score chaser. Once the player dies, they can retry to get a better score. Between different playthroughs, the animal position and different criteria will be randomised. This introduces replay value to the game and makes sure every playthrough is different. The world itself, platforming challenges in the world, and time pickups will not be changed between playthroughs.

The game is pretty short and a playthrough can be completed in one session. The big reason to replay is if you want to get a better score.

Scope

We think this project is in scope because:

- The character controller and platforming elements are really simple.
- Most of our art will come from asset packs. It will still need to be edited and placed according to the level design, but we won't need as much time designing it.
- We can always decide to include less animals if we need to. We currently have 12 animals, but the game can perfectly work with less if we need to.

What will take up a lot of work is the level design and menu design. The level needs to be interesting and believable, while still having some fun platforming challenges. The menu will be handmade and needs to be intuitive enough for small children.