

The object of the game is to be the most populous animal by the end of 10 environmental events. You will spend food tokens, which you pick up each turn, on one of four categories (Attack, Defence, Sensory, Reproduction) to increase your animal's stats. On a basic level, Attack will help you kill the other animals (reducing your opponents' population), Defence helps you defend yourself, Sensory will help you cope with the environmental changes that occur in the game, and Reproduction will help you build up your population numbers. The environmental events will occur at regular intervals throughout the game (after each turn?) and basically act as a time limit for the game.

In each turn you will pick up an amount of food tokens (the amount determined by your current stats as well as the environment) and/or cards to increase your animal's stats. You can then spend them on the cards in hand to improve your animal (kinda like Citadels). After this "evolution stage" you can then attack your opponents' animals. The attack must have an element of chance in it – even the most powerful animal must be able to lose to the weakest animal - so a dice roll based on your attack/defence? A successful attack and your opponent loses population points.

The environmental events will add an element of randomness to the entire game. I was thinking you'd have a pack of 50 cards with a variety of events, ranging from fairly harmless (it's got a bit rainy) to environmentally catastrophic (meteor strike, Donald Trump). Each game will include ten of these events and depending on how well you have improved your animal's sensory score will depend how well you cope with them. A failure to cope with the change and your population will plummet.

The animal evolution system needs to be fairly simple. Basic cards can increase size, strength, speed, which can be applied to attack or defence. Specific cards for developing sight, hearing, gills, flying can increase your sensory score (now I think about it, sensory might not be the best name for it) BUT these are most at risk of environmental changes – eg. If you increase your sight but then a meteor hits and your animal has to live underground. We can have a bit of fun with the reproduction cards - "Your animal has evolved a sexy bum and has become more desirable" etc.

There will also be "bonus" cards which can be used specifically towards Attacking and Defending. Eg. Spitting acid – increase your roll +2. Your tail detaches when you get bitten – increase your defence roll by +2. These will have a limited usage, so you discard after use.

I'd probably say before getting into the ridiculously complicated world of game theory and game mechanics the first steps would be...

- Have a basic understanding of the evolutionary path of mammals, fish, birds, insects etc. so the basic evolution cards have some sequence to them. I would like to include several over the top silly ones (breathes fire, telepathy, develops AI and fuses with robotic masters etc) but most of the game should be based on how animals actually evolve.
- Come up with a list of environmental events and how they could effect the game world. 50 seems like a lot but I think you'd need at least that to make a 10 event game random enough that you'd want to keep playing.

Oh, and we need a title. I know Survival Of The Fittest was muted at one point but that was also the title of the ITV2 reality show that first introduced the world to Dani Dyer, so I think we can do better.