

Flock Box Manual

Version 1.8



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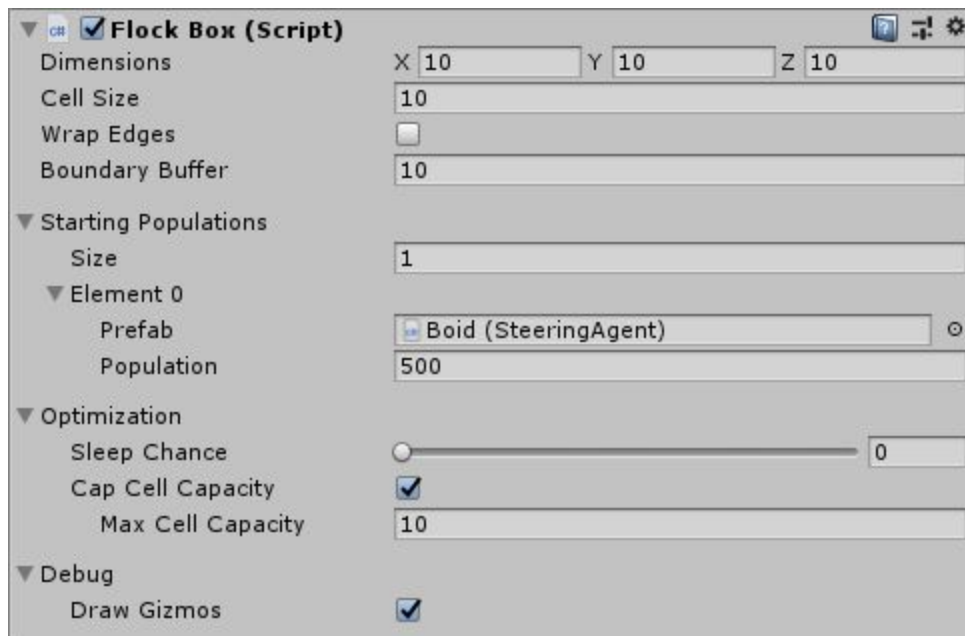
QUICK START

Refer to any of the Demo scenes for an example of how to set up a FlockBox. If you're starting from scratch there are 3 primary components you'll need:

1. SteeringAgent prefab
 - a. Add a SteeringAgent component to an empty GameObject and save it as a prefab.
2. BehaviorSettings asset
 - a. Use Create > Asset > BehaviorSettings to create a new BehaviorSettings asset in the project. Add any desired behaviors (Alignment + Cohesion + Separation is the classic Boid formula).
 - b. Drag and drop the settings onto the SteeringAgent prefab's activeSettings slot.
3. FlockBox component
 - a. Add a FlockBox component to an empty GameObject in the scene.
 - b. Create a new slot in Starting Populations and add the SteeringAgent prefab.

Press Play and watch them go! For more information on Steering Behaviors, see the [References](#) section

FLOCK BOXES

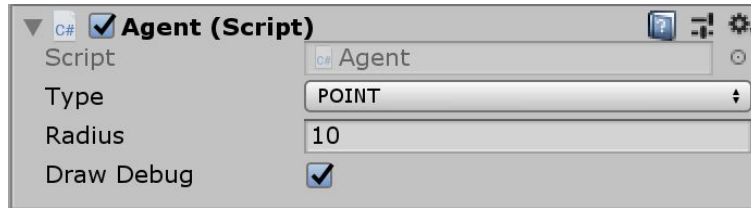


<i>Dimensions</i>	Number of cells in each dimension. The world space extents of the FlockBox will be dimensions * cellSize. Note: you can set one dimension to 0 to create a 2D FlockBox.
<i>Cell Size</i>	FlockBox uses spatial hashing for optimization, meaning that the box is divided into cells that each keep track of the agents they contain for faster lookup.

	Cells that are too large or small may cause performance issues. The ideal cell size is usually going to be around the max perception distance of the most common agents.
<i>Wrap Edges</i>	Defines whether or not agents can travel through the boundary and wrap to the other side of the box. If false, agents will always be constrained to positions inside the box.
<i>Boundary Buffer</i>	Defines a “buffer zone” which agents will attempt to steer out of when wrapEdges is set to false. (see Containment Steering Behavior)
<i>Starting Populations</i>	Define populations of Agents that should be instantiated in Start(). Their position and velocity will be random. Note: you can also drag individual Agents into the Scene as children of the FlockBox and they will automatically be detected (see Avoidance Demo).
<i>Sleep Chance</i>	A percentage value that determines how often Steering Agents skip updating their velocity. A value of .5 means that roughly half the Steering Agents will not update on any given frame. This can be great for performance if the reduced fidelity isn't a problem.
<i>Cap Cell Capacity</i>	Limits the number of Agents that will be recorded in each cell. When Agents are evenly distributed, they can make use of spatial hashing to limit the number of neighbors they need to calculate with. If Steering Agents become bunched together, spatial hashing will no longer provide a benefit. In case of overcrowding, this cap will limit the total number of neighbors that each individual is aware of to prevent the framerate from getting dragged down.
<i>Display Gizmos</i>	Draw debug information in the Scene View. The full extent of the FlockBox and boundary buffer in world space are drawn as wireframe boxes. At runtime cells that have at least one occupant will be shaded in.

AGENTS

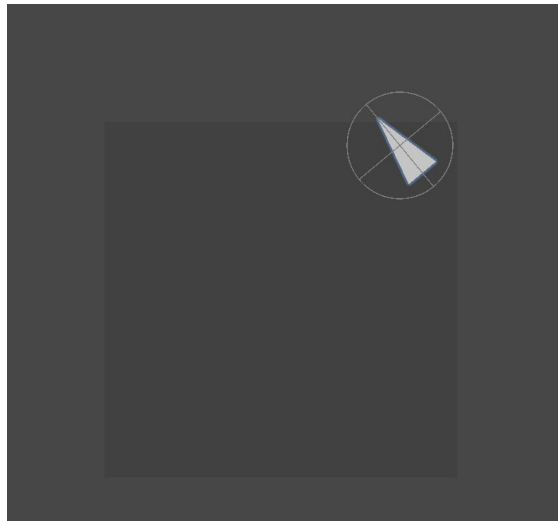
An Agent is any entity that is involved in the Flock Box simulation. A basic Agent will not move.



Type

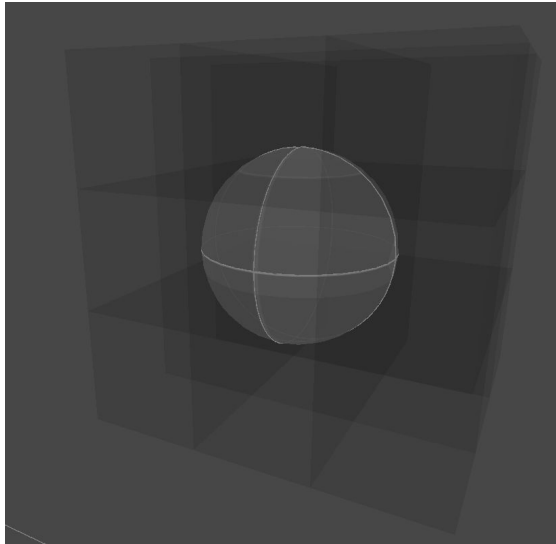
POINT and LINE behave similarly to SPHERE and CYLINDER, but can update much faster when moved. The trade-off is that they offer lower fidelity. In general, SPHERE and CYLINDER should generally only be used for large, immobile Agents, while POINT and LINE should be used for small, mobile Agents (like Boids).

POINT



Agent will only occupy a single cell based on their center point, even if their radius extends into neighboring cells.

SPHERE

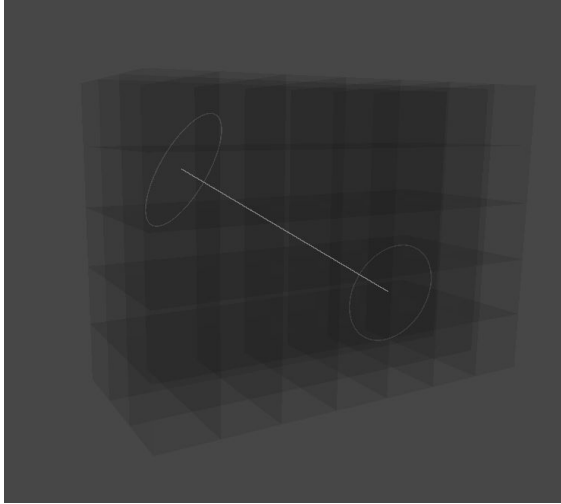


This Agent will occupy all cells within a bounding box containing a sphere.

LINE

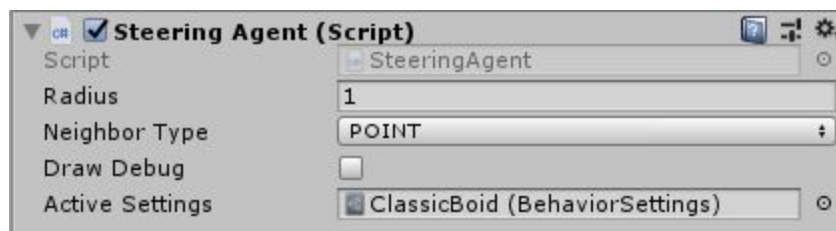


This Agent will occupy all cells in a straight line. The cells are calculated using Bresenham's line algorithm.

	<p><u>CYLINDER</u></p>  <p>This Agent will occupy all cells within an axis-aligned bounding box containing a cylinder.</p>
Draw Debug	Draw a Gizmo representing the Agent's Shape

Steering Agents

Steering Agent is derived from Agent, but adds the ability to update its position and velocity based on its surroundings.



Active Settings	Reference to a Behavior Settings asset.
------------------------	---

Terrain Agents

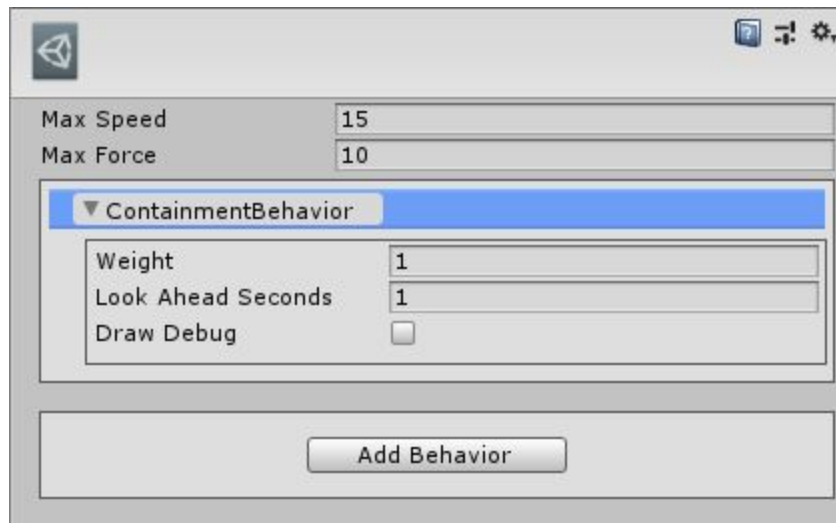
A Terrain-friendly subclass of SteeringAgent. Will use raycasting to stick to the surface of level geometry (see Terrain_Demo).

Physics Agents

A Physics-friendly subclass of SteeringAgent. Will move by setting the velocity of a Rigidbody instead of setting the position of a transform to realistically collide with environmental geometry (see PhysicsAgent_Demo).

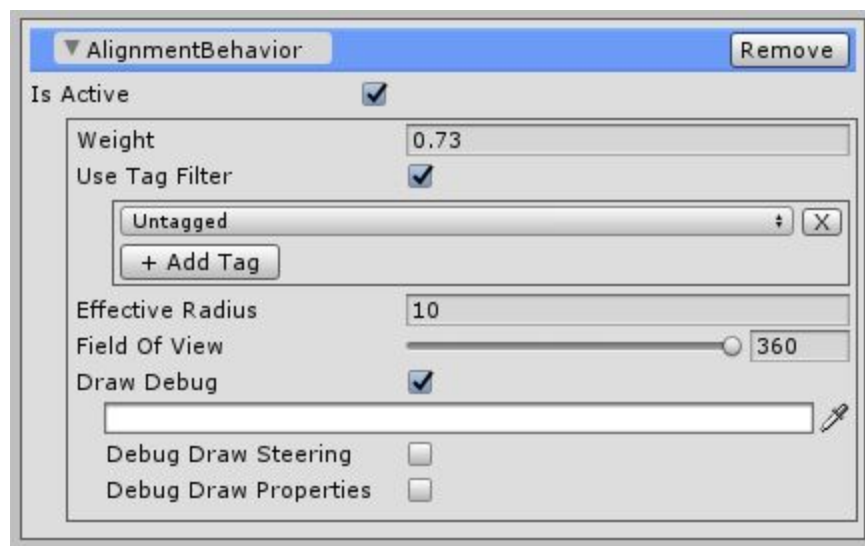
BEHAVIOR SETTINGS

Create a new BehaviorSettings asset with Create > Asset > BehaviorSettings.



Max Speed	The top speed that a steering agent can reach.
Max Force	The maximum force that can be applied to the steering agent. Tune this value to control how fast the agent accelerates.

Steering Behaviors



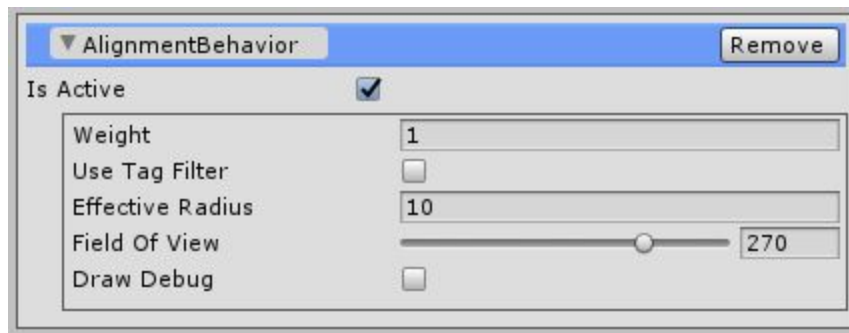
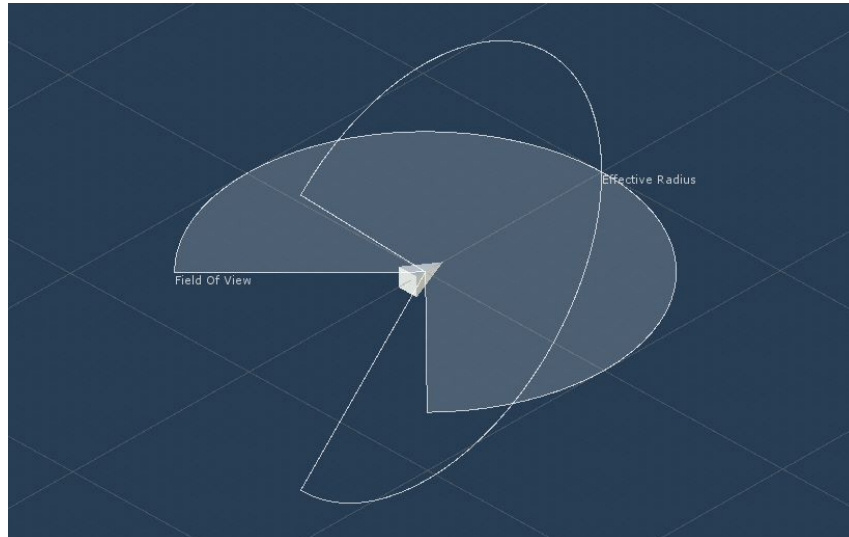
Weight	Adjust this value to change the relative influence of each steering behavior.
Tag Filter	Uses Unity's built-in Tag system. A tag filter should be used if a behavior's steering calculation should only take certain agents into consideration and ignore all others.

	<p>For example: if agents with an Avoidance behavior should only avoid obstacles and not each other, tag the obstacle as "Obstacle" and have the Avoidance behavior filter for that tag. (See Avoidance example).</p> <p>This may not be applicable for all Steering Behaviors (eg. Wander, Containment).</p>
<i>Draw Debug</i>	Enables debug visualization of the steering behavior.
<i>Debug Color</i>	Color to use when drawing debug information for this behavior.
<i>Debug Draw Steering</i>	Draws a line representing the behavior's steering. Will only appear in Play mode.
<i>Debug Draw Properties</i>	Draws gizmos representing the behavior's various options. Text labels will accompany the gizmos when not in Play mode (to avoid visual clutter).

PACKAGED BEHAVIORS

Alignment

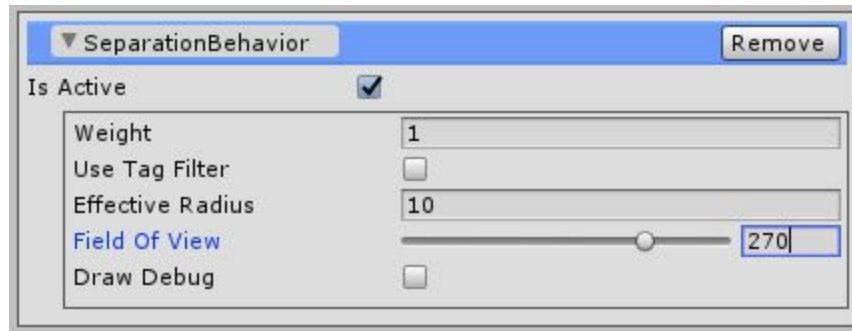
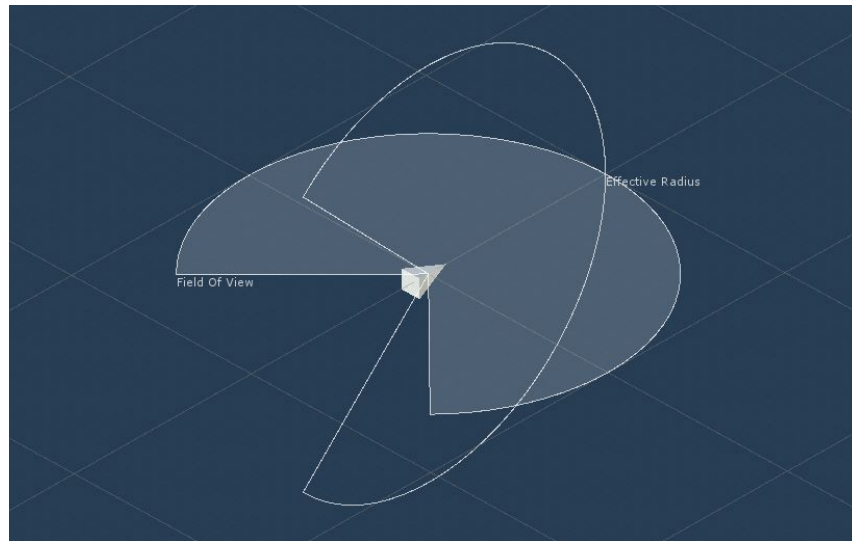
Steer towards the average forward direction of surrounding agents.



<i>Effective Radius</i>	Furthest distance at which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Field of View</i>	Range in degrees within which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.

Separation

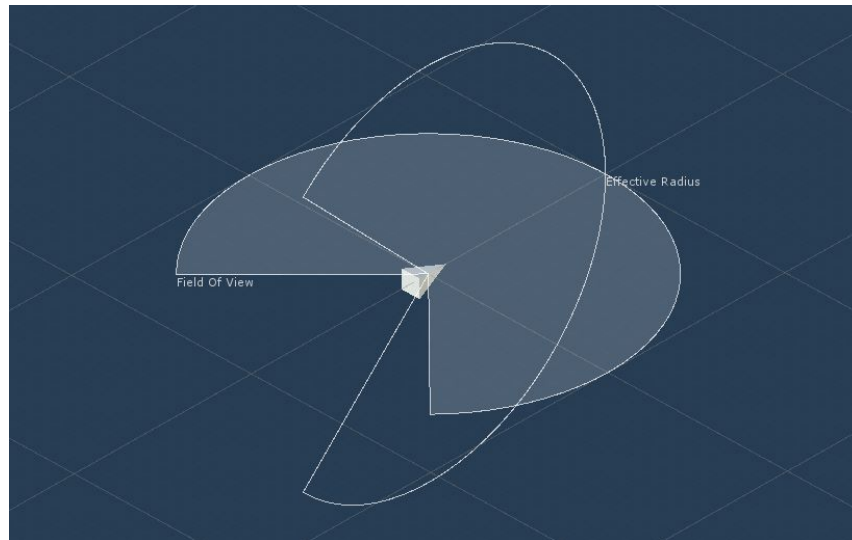
Steer away from nearby agents. Weighted by distance so that the closer other agents get, the greater the separation force becomes.



<i>Effective Radius</i>	Furthest distance at which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Field of View</i>	Range in degrees within which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.

Cohesion

Steer towards the midpoint of surrounding agents.



▼ CohesionBehavior

Remove

Is Active ☒

Weight

1

Use Tag Filter

☐

Effective Radius

10

Field Of View

270

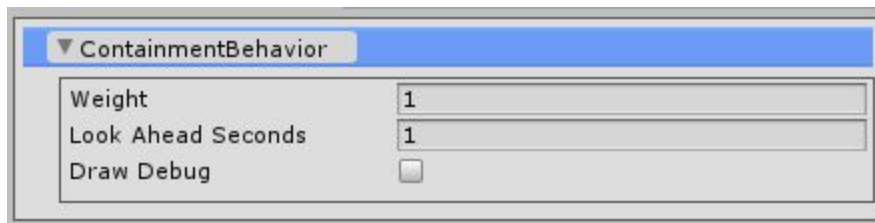
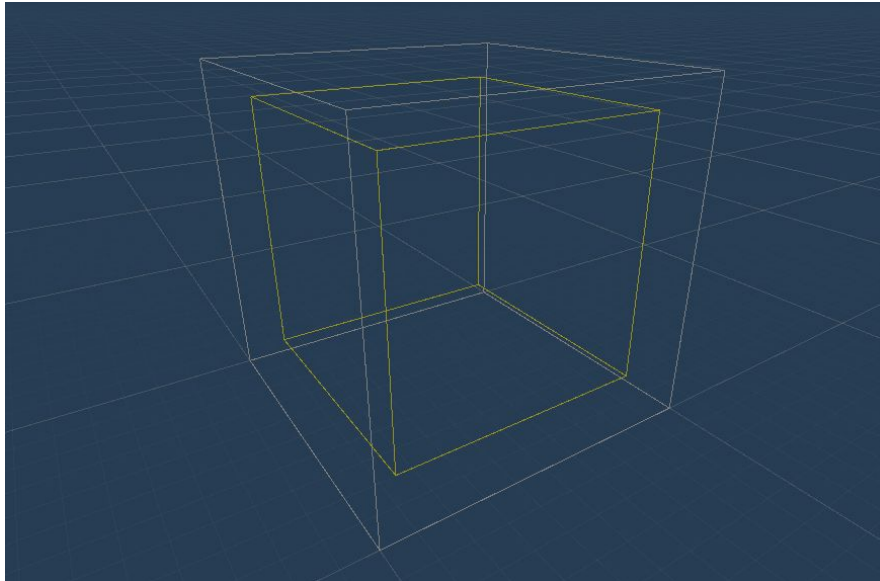
Draw Debug

☐

<i>Effective Radius</i>	Furthest distance at which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Field of View</i>	Range in degrees within which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.

Containment

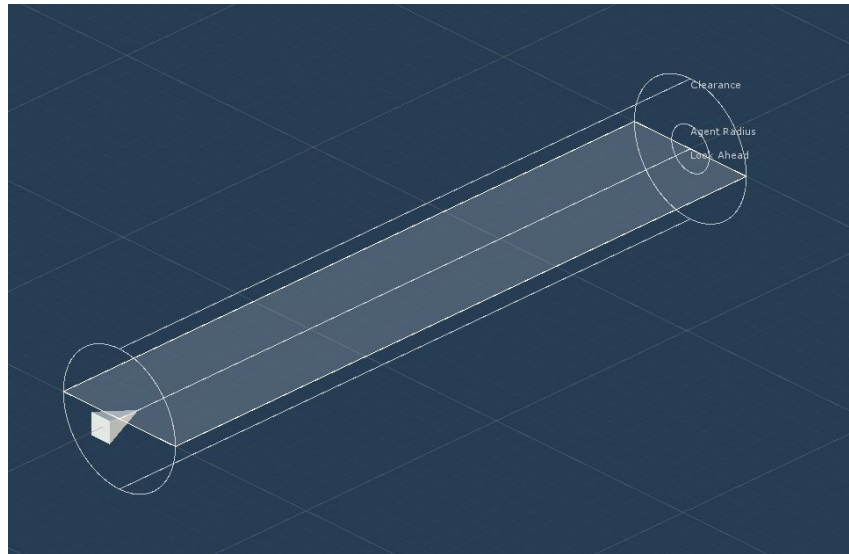
Containment is added automatically to each BehaviorSettings, and is only used when inside a FlockBox with wrapEdges disabled. This behavior will steer the agent out of a buffer zone defined by FlockBox.boundaryBuffer.



<i>Look Ahead Seconds</i>	How many seconds before entering the boundary buffer area that this behavior should begin to steer away from the edge of the Flock Box.
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Avoidance

Steer to avoid an upcoming obstacle. Will stop applying force when the agent's path will not intersect, or is tangential to the surface of the obstacle. Obstacles must be Agents.

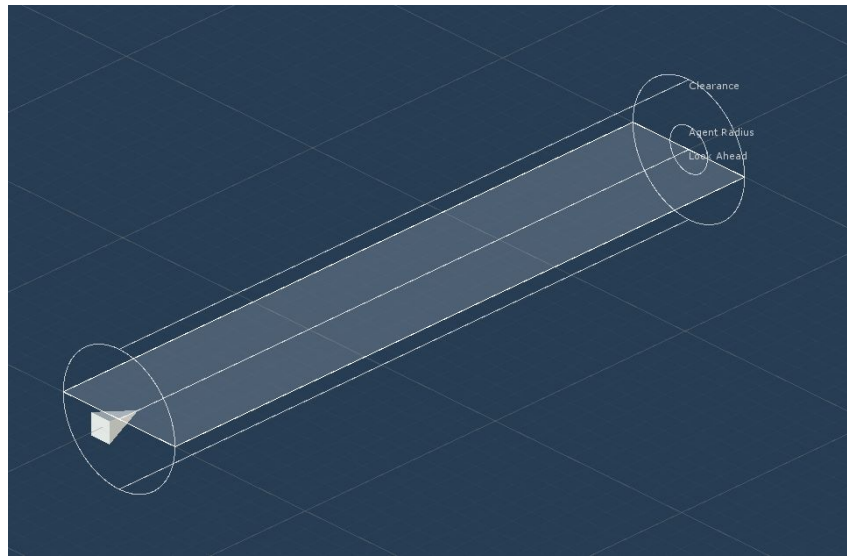


▼ AvoidanceBehavior		Remove
Is Active	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Weight	1	
Use Tag Filter	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Look Ahead Seconds	1	
Clearance	0	
Draw Debug	<input type="checkbox"/>	

<i>Look Ahead Seconds</i>	How many seconds before collision that this behavior will begin to steer away from the expected impact.
<i>Clearance</i>	Extra space to maintain between the SteeringAgent and Obstacles.

ColliderAvoidance

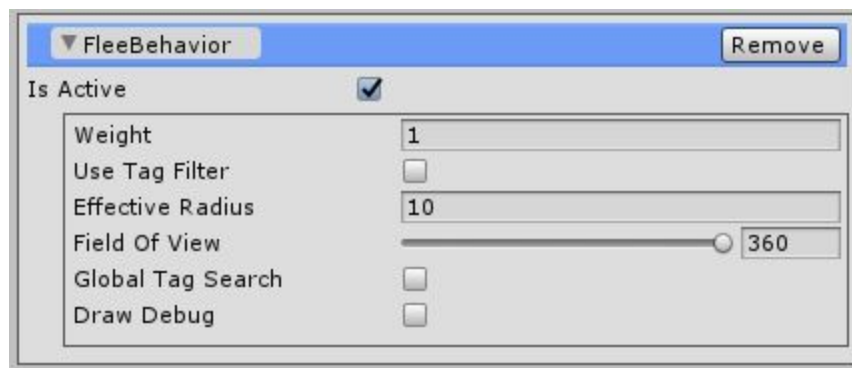
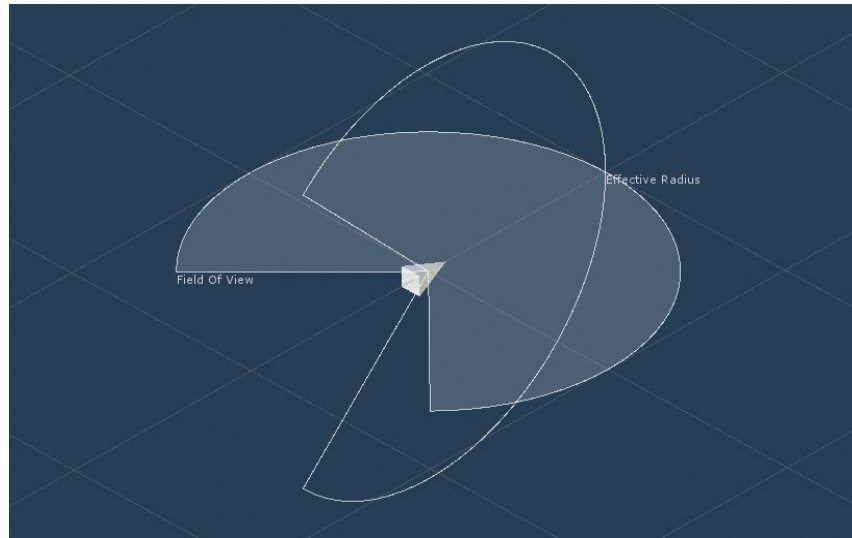
Steer to avoid upcoming Colliders. Less performant than Avoidance, but more useful for complex environments.



<i>Look Ahead Seconds</i>	How many seconds before collision that this behavior will begin to steer away from the expected impact.
<i>Clearance</i>	Extra space to maintain between the SteeringAgent and Obstacles.

Flee

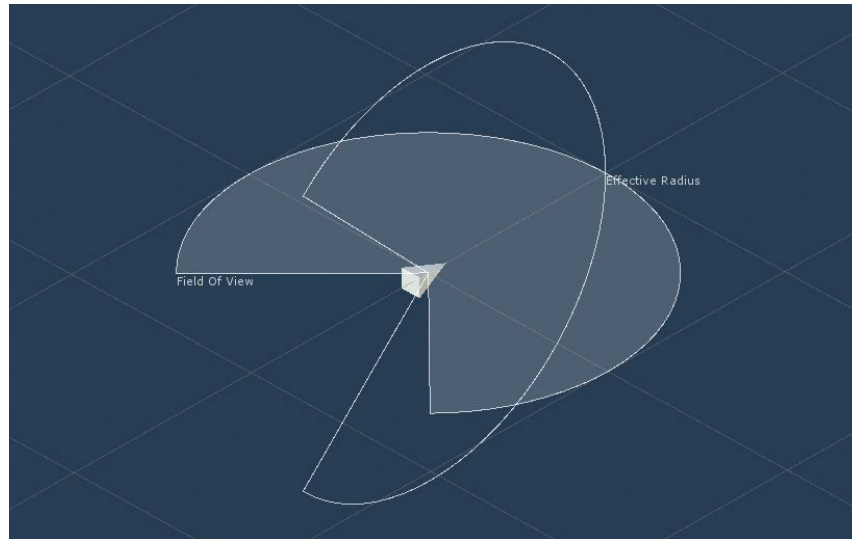
Steer away from the midpoint of other agents.



<i>Effective Radius</i>	Furthest distance at which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Field of View</i>	Range in degrees within which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Global Tag Search</i>	<p>Optimization option. Search for neighbors globally by Tag instead of searching all neighborhood cells individually.</p> <p>Agents will still need to be within <i>Effective Radius</i> to influence steering.</p> <p>Most useful for situations where there will either be a small number of targets, or they will need to be perceptible from far away.</p>

Seek

Steer towards a stationary target.



▼ SeekBehavior

Remove

Is Active ☒

Weight

1

Use Tag Filter

☐

Effective Radius

10

Field Of View

360

Global Tag Search

☐

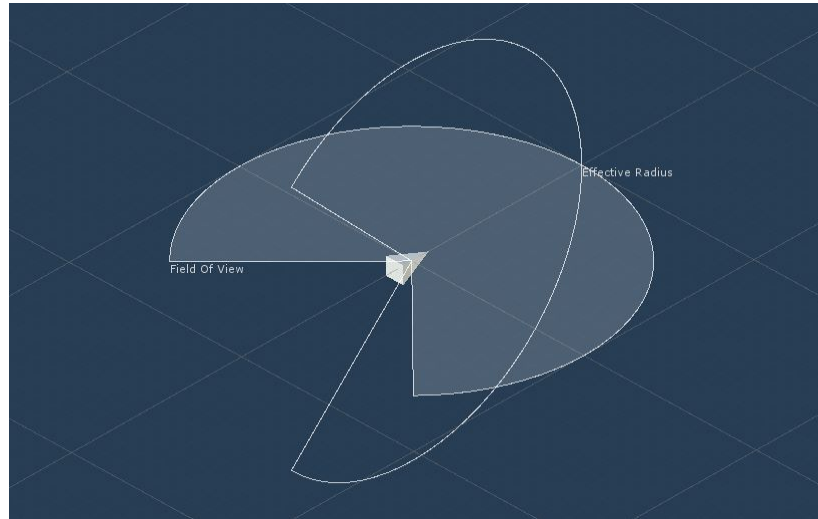
Draw Debug

☐

<i>Effective Radius</i>	Furthest distance at which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Field of View</i>	Range in degrees within which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Global Tag Search</i>	<p>Optimization option. Search for neighbors globally by Tag instead of searching all neighborhood cells individually.</p> <p>Agents will still need to be within <i>Effective Radius</i> to influence steering.</p> <p>Most useful for situations where there will either be a small number of targets, or they will need to be perceptible from far away.</p>

Pursuit

Steer towards an anticipated interception point with a moving target.



▼ PursuitBehavior

Remove

Is Active ☒

Weight

1

Use Tag Filter

☐

Effective Radius

10

Field Of View

360

Global Tag Search

☐

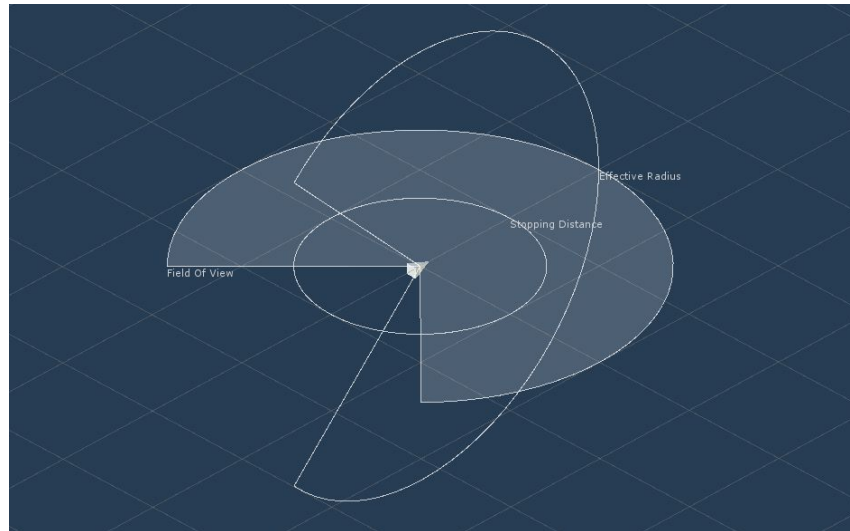
Draw Debug

☐

<i>Effective Radius</i>	Furthest distance at which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Field of View</i>	Range in degrees within which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Global Tag Search</i>	<p>Optimization option. Search for neighbors globally by Tag instead of searching all neighborhood cells individually.</p> <p>Agents will still need to be within <i>Effective Radius</i> to influence steering.</p> <p>Most useful for situations where there will either be a small number of targets, or they will need to be perceptible from far away.</p>

Arrival

Steer towards a stationary target, but apply braking force when approaching to come to a stop.



▼ ArriveBehavior

Remove

Is Active ☒

Weight

1

Use Tag Filter

☐

Effective Radius

10

Field Of View

360

Global Tag Search

☐

Stopping Distance

10

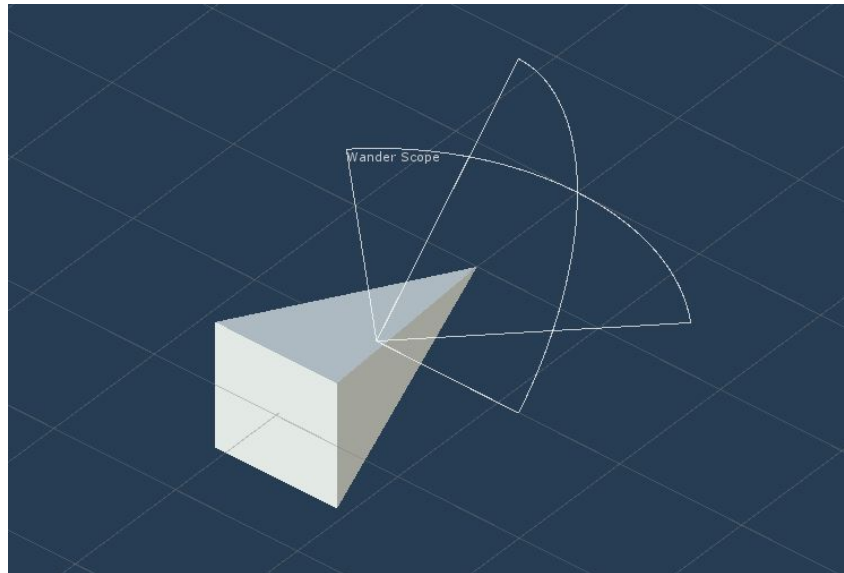
Draw Debug

☐

<i>Effective Radius</i>	Furthest distance at which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Field of View</i>	Range in degrees within which other Agents will affect this behavior's steering calculation.
<i>Global Tag Search</i>	<p>Optimization option. Search for neighbors globally by Tag instead of searching all neighborhood cells individually.</p> <p>Agents will still need to be within <i>Effective Radius</i> to influence steering.</p> <p>Most useful for situations where there will either be a small number of targets, or they will need to be perceptible from far away.</p>
<i>Stopping Distance</i>	Distance at which braking force should be applied.

Wander

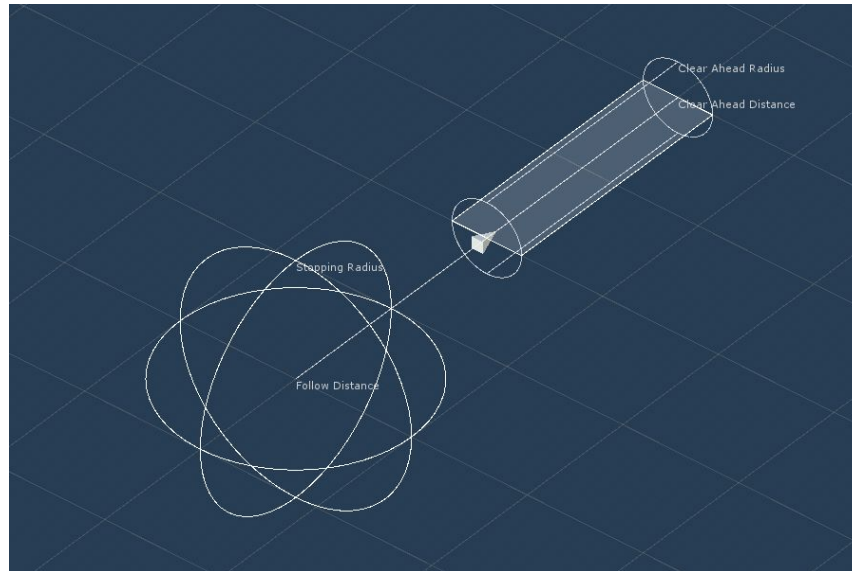
Apply steering force in a random direction. Calculated with Perlin noise.



<i>Wander Scope</i>	Determines the wander force's maximum deviation in degrees from the SteeringAgent's current direction.
<i>Wander Intensity</i>	Determines the rate of change for the wander direction.

Leader Follow

Similar to Arrival. Steer toward a point that is behind a target Leader. If multiple potential leaders are found, the closest one will be chosen. Followers will prioritize steering out of the space ahead of the Leader to prevent them from getting in the Leader's way.

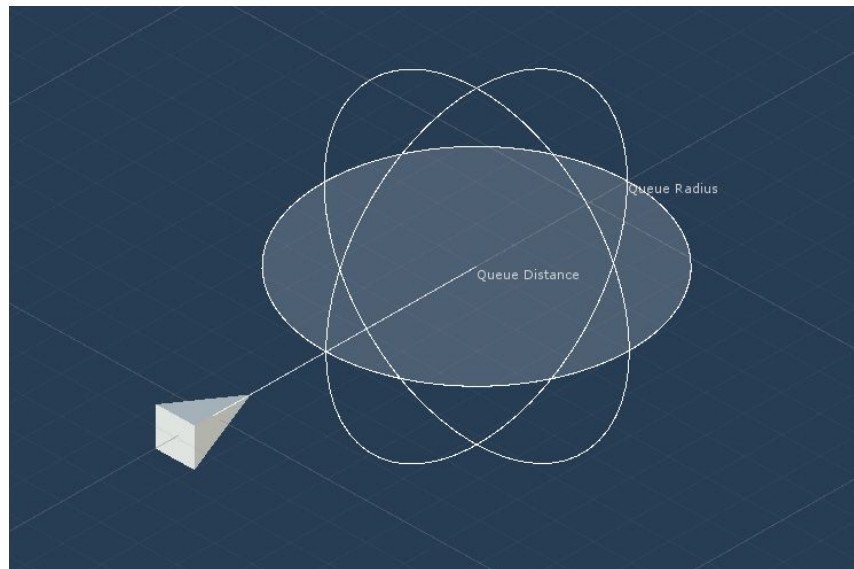


▼ LeaderFollowBehavior		Remove
Is Active	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Weight	1	
Use Tag Filter	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Follow Distance	10	
Stopping Radius	10	
Clear Ahead Distance	30	
Clear Ahead Radius	10	
Draw Debug	<input type="checkbox"/>	

<i>Follow Distance</i>	Distance behind the Leader that Followers should target. Prevents Followers from crowding the Leader.
<i>Stopping Radius</i>	Distance at which braking force should be applied.
<i>Clear Ahead Distance</i>	Length of the cylindrical space ahead of the Leader that Followers will avoid.
<i>Clear Ahead Radius</i>	Radius of the cylindrical space ahead of the Leader that Followers will avoid.

Queue

Apply braking force when blocked by another Agent. Produces the effect of a crowd slowing down when trying to pass through a congested area.



▼ QueueBehavior		Remove
Is Active	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Weight	<input type="text" value="1"/>	
Use Tag Filter	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Queue Distance	<input type="text" value="5"/>	
Queue Radius	<input type="text" value="10"/>	
Draw Debug	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Queue Distance	Determines the center of the search area for Agents blocking this one.
Queue Radius	Determines the radius to search for Agents blocking this one.

WRITING CUSTOM BEHAVIORS

To create a custom behavior, write a class that inherits from `SteeringBehavior` (or any subclass like `RadialSteeringBehavior` or `ForecastSteeringBehavior`) and override `GetSteeringBehaviorVector()`.

```
public override void GetSteeringBehaviorVector(out Vector3 steer, SteeringAgent mine,
SurroundingsContainer surroundings)

{

    //calculate steering and set Vector3 steer.

}
```

Getting Information from Surroundings

Every behavior needs to make sure that enough information is being collected about the Agent's surroundings to calculate the proper steering vector. To accomplish this in a custom behavior, override `AddPerception` and use the following functions on the `SurroundingsContainer` that gets passed in.

```
public override void AddPerception(SteeringAgent agent, SurroundingsContainer surroundings)

{

    // surroundings.SetMinPerceptionRadius(float radius);

}
```

<code>SetMinLookAheadSeconds(float seconds)</code>	Add all Agents this many seconds in front of mine in a straight line.
<code>SetMinPerceptionRadius(float radius)</code>	Add all Agents within this radius around mine.
<code>AddGlobalSearchTag(string tag)</code>	Add all Agents with this Tag (anywhere in the Flock Box)
<code>AddPerceptionShape(Shape shape, Vector3 position)</code>	Add all Agents within a Shape at a point in space.

Any Agents that were discovered will be added to `SurroundingsContainer.allAgents`, and be available for steering calculations when the `SurroundingsContainer` object gets passed into `GetSteeringBehaviorVector(Vector3, SurroundingsContainer)`.

Agent Instance Data

It's possible for agents to have custom instance data without extending the Agent class through `Agent.SetAgentProperty<T>()` and `Agent.GetAgentProperty<T>()`.

This is used in `SeekBehavior` to keep track of a particular seek target and prevent constant target switching, which leads to more natural behavior.

Adding Custom Behaviors to a Behavior Settings

All non-abstract classes derived from `SteeringBehavior` will appear in the "Add Behavior" list automatically using Reflection.

Editing Behavior Values in the Inspector

Any properties that you want to be able to edit in the inspector should either be public or marked with the `[System.Serializable]` attribute.

Further editor customization is not supported because `PropertyDrawers` cannot use polymorphism when the inspected objects are stored in a collection as their base class (such as how behaviors are stored in a `SteeringBehavior` array in `BehaviorSettings`). If you were to write a custom `PropertyDrawer` for a behavior implementation, the `PropertyDrawer` for `SteeringBehavior` would be shown instead.

Property Gizmos

To visualize a custom behavior's properties using Gizmos, override `DrawPerceptionGizmos` inside of `UNITY_EDITOR` compile tags.

```
#if UNITY_EDITOR

    public override void DrawPropertyGizmos(SteeringAgent agent, bool drawLabels)
    {
        // your Gizmos or Handles here
    }

#endif
```


CHANGE LOG

Version 1.1 11/2/2019

- Added CYLINDER shape
- Expanded support for LINE shape, including new fields exposed in Inspector
- Changed "NeighborType" to "Shape"

Version 1.2 11/9/2019

- Added LeaderFollow behavior
- Fixed bug preventing Pursuit behavior from functioning.

Version 1.3 12/12/2019

- Optimized memory allocation.
- Added Optimization option to cap the number of Agents recorded in each cell.

Version 1.4 1/5/2020

- Added helper function to retrieve specific steering behaviors from a BehaviorSettings
- Added example scene for creating in-game UI for changing BehaviorSettings values

Version 1.5 1/29/2020

- Added TerrainAgent.cs, a Terrain-friendly subclass of SteeringAgent.
- Added Terrain_Demo scene as an example of TerrainAgents.

Version 1.6 3/17/2020

- Added ColliderAvoidanceBehavior.cs, a behavior similar to Avoidance that uses Raycasting to steer away from colliders ahead.
- Added PhysicsAgent.cs, a SteeringAgent that supports rigidbody collisions.
- Replaced some Lists with HashSets to solve duplicate entries in neighbor lists.
- Suppressed unnecessary warnings.
- LeaderFollowBehavior has a "clear zone" ahead of the leader that followers will avoid.

Version 1.7 4/20/2020

- Added QueueBehavior.cs, a behavior that applies brake forces to simulate the slowing of congested traffic.
- Added QueueFunnel_Demo scene as an example of Queue behavior.
- Added "Clearance" property to ColliderAvoidanceBehavior and AvoidanceBehavior.
- Added "GlobalTagSearch" property to some behaviors for optimization. Will allow behaviors to look up neighbors by tag instead of searching all neighborhood cells individually. Most useful for situations where there will be either a small number of targets, or they will need to be perceptible from far away.
- Added Debug visualizations for each behavior's properties.
- Added editor tooltips for behavior properties.
- Added TwitchDampening, a component that can be used to dampen twitchy SteeringAgent behavior.
- Added population control to UI_Demo scene. Click anywhere to spawn new agents.

Version 1.8 3/7/2021

- Added ExternalAgent. An Agent type that does not need to be parented to a FlockBox.
- Added PlayerControl_Demo
- Added SeekPostionBehavior. A Seek behavior that can be directed to an arbitrary point instead of an Agent.
- Fix bug with BehaviorSettings custom inspector in Unity 2020.1+

Contact

Send and comments or questions to:

marc@cloudfinegames.com

References

[1] Reynolds, Craig. (1999). Steering Behaviors For Autonomous Characters.

<https://www.red3d.com/cwr/steer/gdc99/>

[2] Shiffman, Daniel. (2012). Nature of Code.

<https://natureofcode.com/book/chapter-6-autonomous-agents/>

[3] Bevilacqua, Fernando. (2013). Understanding Steering Behaviors.

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