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Título: Cascadia in 2025

It’s rare to find a game that does exactly what it promises—and Cascadia nails it. From the moment you see that cover art whispering “harmony with nature,” you know you’re in for a calm, satisfying experience.

When you sit down to play, you find a serene puzzle… until that perfect combo of salmon tokens lands on the board. You know it isn’t actually the optimal play for your wife, but somehow she snags that salmon first and you realize even indirect competition can sting. Ten seconds later the frustation disappears as you realize there’s always another tile waiting. The game is smart enough to steer you clear of truly dead-end draws, so you never feel hopelessly stuck.

Components get top marks from the tarot-sized cards, the high quality habitat tiles to the chunky animal tokens. My only nitpick? The insert is terrible. I still can’t figure out the “correct” way to pack it all away—strangely ironic for a game where everything else fits so perfectly.

The gameplay is every bit as satisfying as expected. Matching terrain types and placing animals feels intuitive, yet there’s enough depth in planning your cascades to keep you hooked for hours. It’s not going to replace your all-time favorite, but it’s the perfect Sunday-afternoon pick-up-and-play that never overstays its welcome.

What really surprised me, though, is the replayability. You’d think a family-oriented puzzle would go stale fast, but the ever-shifting scoring cards for each animal ensure you’re always chasing a fresh goal. No two games ever feel the same.

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Presentation - 10

Engagement - 7

Gameplay - 9

Value - 8

> Final Score: 8.5 / 10

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Wrap-Up:

Cascadia isn’t an earth-shattering epic, but it’s the ideal mood-maker—perfect for a rainy Sunday or dialing down the tension after a cut-throat session. It’s elegant, approachable and cleverly designed to keep you coming back for another game.

It took me two plays for this game to shoot to the top of my want list. It is just an all-round nice time.

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Título: Cascadia - The Official "Rolling In The Meep" Review

This review originally posted at Rolling In The Meep. Like what you see? Come check us out!

The Pacific Northwest is a beautiful place. Welcome to the region known as Cascadia, where you will be challenged with creating a diverse landscape, all the while managing how different animal habitats mesh with one another. Can you successfully create the most harmonious ecosystem, or will you fail to achieve the proper balance?

Game Name: Cascadia

Designer: Randy Flynn

Artist: Beth Sobel

Publisher: Flatout Games

Player Count: 1-4 Players

Playing Time: 30-45 minutes

Upfront Disclaimer: I purchased my own retail copy of Cascadia. No free copy was provided for review, and I’ve had no contact with the publisher regarding this game. All opinions contained within are my own unbiased thoughts.

Welcome to…the Pacific Northwest?!

I’m going to be completely honest with you here – before turning to page one of the rulebook for this game, I had no idea that the name Cascadia referred to the region of the Pacific Northwest of the United States, as well as the western coast of Canada up through the Yukon Territory (thanks for this, American public school system!). OK, in my defense, I also live on the East Coast but anyways…back to discussing the game.

In their own words, the designer writes that this game is a “puzzly tile-laying and token-drafting game” – and that description about sums it up as accurately and concisely as anything I would write myself, so no need to restate that. Here’s a brief overview of how a game of Cascadia is setup and played:

1) Each player is given a “starter habitat tile”, which is a 3-tile section of environment. No matter which one you get, they all contain all five types of habitat (Mountains, Forests, Praries, Wetlands, and Rivers). They all also contain all five types of wildlife (Bear, Elk, Salmon, Hawk, and Fox). So no matter which one you get, for the most part the game starts in a fairly even balance.

2) A certain number of habitat tiles are randomly drawn to be used in the game and placed face down in a pile in the center (20 tiles per player, plus 3 – so for example, 43 tiles in a 2 player game, 63 in a 3 player game, etc). This method ensures that the game will end when each player has played exactly 20 turns.

Gameplay on each turn is simple: There are four habitat tiles shown face up in the center, and they are each randomly paired with four different randomly chosen wildlife tokens from the draw bag. These are paired together with each other as a group for drafting (although, there are ways you can earn “nature tokens” that allow you to mix and match whichever wildlife token you want with whichever habitat tile). Each turn, a player drafts one of the four groups, then places the habitat tile anywhere they want in their own ecosystem (provided it must connect to at least one side of any existing tile they have). Then they take the wildlife token they drafted and place it on top of any unoccupied habitat tile in their ecosystem, so long as it shows the icon of that animal to allow it to be placed.

3) Lastly, a new random habitat tile is turned over, pairing it with a new randomly chosen wildlife token from the draw bag, to replenish the center of the play area back up to four choices, and the next player takes their turn. This will continue until each player finishes with a total of 23 habitat tiles in front of them (the 3-tile starter piece plus 20 selections made during the game). Scores are tallied, and the player with the most points wins!

Scoring in Cascadia happens in a few basic ways, which dictates the strategy behind where to place your habitat tiles and wildlife tokens, and what you might need to stop your opponents from grabbing. For the habitat tiles, they are scored by measuring how large of a “habitat corridor” you build for each of the five types. You score 1 point per habitat tiles in your LARGEST group of each type. For example, I may have two separate Forests in my environment, with one being 5 tiles in size and the other being 3 tiles in size. I would score 5 points here for my largest forest (and nothing for any of the other smaller forests). Additionally, there is a bonus that varies based on player count, but the person who has the single largest of each habitat tile corridor receives bonus points – incentivizing you to keep track of what your opponents are doing and try to always stay one step ahead.

And then of course, you also score based on the wildlife tokens you’ve placed, and this is where the game gets really interesting, and changes each time you play. Each play you choose one rule for how each of the five wildlife types get scored – the game provides you with four different options for each animal, so if you draw randomly and mix/match, that means there are 1,024 different combinations of scoring systems you could come up with (my math is better than my geography apparently). For your first game, the designer recommends using a specific set of the five rules to keep it simple. Bears, for example, like to be placed in pairs, but with no other bears around them – and you score based on how many isolated pairs of bears you can place. Foxes on the other hand, absolutely LOVE a diversity of wildlife – you score one point for each unique type of animal is directly adjacent to any fox you place (including other foxes). And those crazy elk? They demand to be placed in straight lines, and your score grows depending on how long those lines get!

Examples of scoring cards for each animal (these are some of the most basic)

My Thoughts

I feel like nature-themed board games have been having a moment recently, and I must say – I don’t mind it at all. Just staring at the beautiful artwork by Beth Sobel on the front of the Cascadia box really sets the mood for the experience on which you’re about to embark. There is something so satisfying about watching the environment unfold in front of you as you build it out over the course of the game. It’s a pretty rare find to have a game so deeply embedded with strategic thinking, that also somehow just feels…relaxing to play. But that is what Randy Flynn has managed to achieve here.

It’s quick to teach, and just a graceful, fluid experience to play each time. Theme just overflows in this game, and you get a sense of exactly what they were going for even if you haven’t read the rulebook. The fact that you need to balance growing your habitat in the right design and shape, but all the while plotting out ways to keep your wildlife grouped the way it needs to be, means you have to be strategic with every single turn. And yet, leaves open so many possibilities – sometimes you just want to focus on building something visually pleasing in front of you, and you can still find a way to be very rewarded for doing so. Cascadia really thought of everything here – the rulebook is short and efficient, but goes on to include different achievements/scenarios you can play, which will keep the game coming back to your table over and over again. They even included a special “Family” rule card you can use, if you want to play the game with young children and reduce the complexity even further – although I found that even my 8-year-old was able to pick the full normal rules up in no time, and even told me that this was his “favorite game of all time” when we finished our first round!

Gosh, it’s hard to really find very much here that I didn’t like. One very minor gripe for me revolves around the wildlife tokens. They are small wooden discs with a separate color for each animal. No issue with the quality of the wood, but they somehow feel…cheap. The animals are only printed on one side of the token, and at least on my copy, the printing doesn’t seem to be perfectly centered on all of them. It would have been nice to find a design to print that embellished the look of the tokens a little more. The other thing, also minor, that feels a little off, are those times when you are able to place wildlife tokens into habitat tiles that just make you chuckle a little bit. Occasionally, you’re going to draft a salmon and then place it…in the middle of a prairie. Or grab yourself that Elk and drop it in its new home…the middle of a wetland. While I totally get why the game is designed this way, that’s about the only very minor thing that sometimes breaks you out of the theme for a minute. Neither of these two complaints affect the gameplay at all though, which is fortunate. Overall, just a really well thought out experience.

Solo Mode – Sometimes it’s great to wander alone

My first attempt at solo mode – a 97 point winner for Scenario 1

Solo mode, very pleasingly, plays almost identical to the normal 2-4 player Cascadia game. You set everything up the same way you would as if playing a 2-player game. The only difference – each time you draft your selection, you take remaining habitat tile/wildlife token that is furthest to the right, and discard it from the game completely (imagine an invisible second player just drafting those before your next turn). You build out your environment the same way, and play for the same 20 turns you would in any other game. At the end, you score yourself against a rubric provided in the rule book to see how you did:

And if that was all there was to it, they would have a half decent Solo mode on their hands that I could see someone enjoying for a few plays before moving on. I guess I shouldn’t be surprised based on how well the rest of the game was designed, but it turns out that they found a way to make this far more enjoyable than expected: through the inclusion of the above-mentioned “scenarios” you can play through. These scenarios frankly work BEST in solo mode – there are 15 to play through, and they involve playing your game with 5 specific rule cards for the wildlife, and then incorporating different designs into your environment all while trying to score over a certain minimum point threshold. These scenarios turned this solo game into something that I LOVE bringing back out to the table time and time again. It’s a quick setup and plays on the lower end of the suggested play time – I’d say about 30 mins for a solo game if I put in an average amount of thought to my strategy. And if you want to ignore the scenarios and just play – that’s still fun, and you’ll probably get your monies worth either way. But the scenarios, for me at least, are where this experience shined in solo play.

Final Verdict (using the BGG scoring system):

Core 2-4 Player Mode: 9/10 (Excellent – Very Much Enjoy Playing)

Solo Mode: 8/10 (Very Good – Enjoy Playing and Would Suggest It)

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia Review of Gameplay and Mechanics (Mostly)

\*\*\*This BBG forum post was composed as a course requirement for an honors seminar at Central College (Board in Class: An Academic Survey of Modern Board Games, SP 25). Constructive feedback and conversation from all BGG users is welcomed and encouraged.\*\*\*

I recently played Cascadia (2021) in an environmental science class with three other classmates, and this post is going to be partially an honest review and partially a talk of mechanics and other aspects of the game. All four of us were new to the game, and we each found it simple to learn, which allowed for better re-playability and teachability, which I thought worked well for the game. The first time out of three that we played, the mechanics of the game made it a bit difficult to follow along, but with practice and a couple more rounds or so we were all enjoying ourselves within the game.

Because this is meant to be a game regarding the ecosystems and biomes, I must say that I’m not entirely sure how accurate each biome is with its animal pair – for example, it said salmon could be found in plains regions (amongst other places like rivers, which did make sense) and other animals in unlikely areas. On one hand, this allows for more variety with tile placements on the game map, but if the goal was to show accurate representations of animal environments, it does not meet that idea. However, the open drafting and endgame bonuses I think make up for that because it is simple and fun enough to overshadow the accuracy issues.

The game itself takes anywhere from 30-45 minutes, depending on the experience of the players and the time each one takes per turn, and it especially takes longer the first couple of playthroughs. Given that this is a strategy based game, I think the timing makes sense for a good sit-down game night with friends willing to think and strategize during the game. I’ve personally played several different kinds of strategy games which took anywhere from 10 minutes all the way up to 2 hours to complete, although those are both on the extreme sides. And, while I don’t hate against either of those two types of games and actually find them endearing, the 10 minute strategy game was very stressful, and had many objectives to complete in a short amount of time, which made it frustrating to play (although by the second or third playthrough it was better). The 2 hour games feel like they drag on quite a bit, and turns take a long time because there is so much to do in order for the game to finish. I think Cascadia forces you to relax a bit in a good way, because while it’s turn-based, a player can think for as long as they need to do their play while also not having much to do each turn, making the game move faster.

It’s really interesting playing a world-building game such as this, because I personally don’t get the opportunity outside of my honors class to play them. I really enjoyed this aspect of the game because every player had different maps with different landscapes, which I thought was really interesting to see at the end of each round. This mechanic really made me think and decide what to prioritize for points, which is great in this type of game. However, one mechanic I wasn’t too fond of was the point values. Besides small plays someone could make while using them in game, and deciding the winner in the event of a tie at the end, I didn’t think they were all that useful in the game. Some of my classmates used them, I did once out of three or four games and I found that it didn’t really make a difference how many nature points I had just because you gain so many other points through the tiles and animal tokens. I think a way to improve them is make them more necessary to the game play or remove them altogether, because I feel like players wouldn’t notice much if they weren’t in the game at all, but that’s my own personal opinion.

Also, I’ve never played any other versions of the game, but I think it would be interesting to have more animal choices or even plant choices to add to the game. Ecosystems are built off of both, as well as other things, but I think just the variety would make a nice aesthetic choice for the next version of the choice. On that same topic, though, I do really love the artwork for the box and game pieces because while small, they add a nice visual to the gameplay and the color coded animal tiles make it easy to spot from the middle of the table.

In conclusion, I thought this was a very fun game with a lot of engaging mechanics, turns, and artwork despite a few minor things I think could be improved in newer versions, if they haven’t been already. I would love to play this game again soon, and hope others are encouraged to try it out for themselves.

Adrian Kifer

@Akifer

Also, I’ve never played any other versions of the game, but I think it would be interesting to have more animal choices or even plant choices to add to the game. Ecosystems are built off of both, as well as other things, but I think just the variety would make a nice aesthetic choice for the next version of the choice.

Then you might try the Landmarks expansion! I bet you would like it!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia: The Perfect Mix of Strategy and Fun in Under an Hour!

If you’re hunting for a game that checks all the boxes—quick, fun, and just the right amount of strategic thinking—Cascadia is it! This has become a favorite in our family and friend group because it hits that sweet spot: challenging enough to keep the strategists engaged, but simple enough for anyone to jump in and play without feeling overwhelmed.

One of the best things about Cascadia is its versatility. Whether we’re wrapping up a busy day or sneaking in some fun during a get-together, its quick playtime makes it easy to fit in. Even better, it’s approachable for all ages and skill levels, which means everyone can enjoy it without feeling out of their depth.

The gameplay keeps things interesting with just enough decisions to make you feel clever but never bogged down. Plus, it’s got this satisfying flow that makes you want to play round after round—perfect for when you’ve got a little time to kill or want to decompress with something engaging.

If you’re looking for a game that delivers fun without dragging on or making your brain hurt, give Cascadia a try. Trust me, once you play, you’ll be reaching for it again and again!

Totally agree. I played this a short while ago after several months on the shelf. It just plays so easily, has few rules, isn't aggressive and looks good on the table. I play solo so its easy to see the requirements.

One downside i have found: the configuration cards would have been so much better is they had included examples of specific requirements. I had to keep going back to the rules for clarifications.

===RESEÑA===

Título: ?Cascadia Review?

Cascadia Review

1-4 Players

30-45 Minutes

Medium Light Weight

Overview

Cascadia is a nature-themed board game where players build habitats in the Pacific Northwest. Through tile-laying mechanics, players create landscapes for five types of wildlife—bears, elk, salmon, hawks, and foxes—each with unique scoring objectives. The game combines spatial strategy with pattern-building, challenging players to place wildlife and habitat tiles efficiently.

The Great

️Beth Sobel art. Need I say more?

️The simplicity of choice: take one set of landscape tile and animal token and place both in your play area. But the choices of what’s best for you and where to put your choices feel almost endless

The Good

️Cascadia scales so well in both player count and difficulty level. I’ve enjoyed solo plays and plays of 4. We’ve tried the family variant as well as many combinations of goal cards and loved it every time

The Might-Be-Bothersome

️Player interaction is pretty limited/non-existent, which might be a minus to some players.

️There is an element of luck with the tile/token pairings

Final Thoughts

I just love this game. There aren’t many games that I’ll pull out for a solo sesh, but Cascadia is one that works beautifully for that! I adore the theme, the art, and the puzzly nature of the game that seems to continually open up with good choices rather than close in with bad ones. Cascadia is toward the top of my list for a reason!

Review originally posted on Instagram. Click below to view the post, complete with photos from our game session!

Cascadia Review - Sara Always Loses on Instagram

[q="saraalwaysloses"] the puzzly nature of the game that seems to continually open up with good choices rather than close in with bad ones.

I also love the puzzle solving aspect of this game.

When I first began to play Cascadia, my initial thoughts were that the game was too simple, too easy to play with. Then I found out that it is great to introduce players, and having to manage both animals and habitats can be quite challenging without having to resort to a big engine and a lot of rules.

All in all, a great game.

===RESEÑA===

Título: The Lure of Cascadia

It was there, in the elk under an azure sky, in the clacking of pebbles rolling down a scarped mountain slope.

The lure of Cascadia. I was captivated.

It didn't matter that the elk was part of the game box's artwork, or that the clacking was really the sound of the guy on the promotional video rummaging through the tokens bag. It still added to the Cascadian mystique, the call of a faraway, almost mythical place - one we would most likely never visit.

Would this be our next game?

I'd been feeling the itch for a while, the thirst for a new gaming experience. My wife is my chief playing companion, but many of our previous games cast us as opponents more than partners. As a multisolitaire tile-layer, however, Cascadia promised the chance to roll out new worlds unhindered by direct rivalry.

Persuaded by the welter of glowing reviews, we took the plunge and embarked on what quickly became our first real shared gaming journey.

Because, above all, that's what Cascadia has been for us - a beautiful, absorbing journey. Nearly two years have passed, and I can say we have visited - are still visiting - Cascadia, our Cascadia.

Together, we have scaled the heights where hawks survey everything - especially other hawks.

We have marvelled at the elk herds straddling entire habitat corridors.

We have formed perfect salmon chains and identical groups of bears carefully segregated from each other.

We have slid habitats into place with architectural mastery.

And we keep on and on. We open the box, and Cascadia exists again.

In my more absurd moments, I sometimes imagine meeting someone from Cascadia. I go goggle-eyed and babble stuff like, "Wow, a person from Cascadia! Tell me, do the elks there really stand around in weird geometric formations? And the hawks - do they all do that 'line of vision' thing?"

No, don't laugh. It was just like that when my family visited the place where the TV series Downton Abbey was filmed. We couldn't help asking the staff there if the actors were 'like that in real life'.

We want real, even in a series, even in a game.

But how real can a game really be? I'm not talking about theme. I'm talking about a genuine connection with reality.

Does Cascadia the game connect with Cascadia the bioregion? Is there a point where both mystically coincide?

I dream so.

Just take the name, for example.

Cascadia.

I say it, and I'm already seeing spray-veils of waterfalls, promises of cascading effects. The name itself inspires calmness, peace. It's kind of hard to get seriously frustrated playing a game called 'Cascadia', even when the luck goes against you.

Like most folks, I don't take kindly to luck randomly sabotaging my plans. When I've invested time and money in a game, I expect a bit of consideration, my allotted dose of enjoyment. Don't tell me I'm just unlucky.

But in Cascadia, I never really suffer that stab of randomness that pure luck inflicts. Luck is there, of course, in the draw of the tiles and counters, but it is veiled by the Cascadian mists.

Here, luck plays the part of nature's unpredictability. So when those much-needed bears fail to come out of the bag, that doesn't feel like bad luck, it feels more like bears being bears. "Maybe they're just hibernating," I joke. "Yeh, 'cos bears hibernate, don't they? And salmon have their seasons, right? So who am I to get annoyed when they don't answer my petty demands? This is Cascadia, this is nature! A bit of humility, please!"

I often end up muttering this kind of thing under my breath during play. Sometimes my wife mumbles back her assent, though too often she's busy muttering her own thoughts. "Oh, can't I just twist that tile the other way so it fits with this new one?" The answer is always "No'", of course, unless I'm also in a spot and in need of a favour. (Don't be scandalised - we only commit such a crime when we've both blown our chances of achieving our objectives.)

Our Cascadian hikes are often spent like this, in a gentle communion of muttering. Which is what makes it a journey rather than a rivalry. We're not after the winning score; we're after that elusive consonance of puzzle with nature. And there is a lot of that along the way.

Take the habitats. Tile-laying has never been so organic. Watching habitats evolve, it's easy to forget that this is basically a puzzle. As sweeping forests blend with threads of intertwining mountains and rivers, we breathe the air of balance and consonance. Forces of nature and logic fuse in a colourful dance of biospheric patterns.

We love watching those patterns grow. Closed clusters of fiercely jealous bears form among serene elk herds, peppered with the occasional snooping, subversive fox and interlaced by the exuberant flow of salmon - all overarched by that clear-eyed geometry of hawks.

We love how objectives and animals alter priorities and behaviours. Now, suddenly, the elks are the geometrically arranged ones, and foxes unwittingly become a unifying force. Everything ebbs and flows, determined and guided by the shifting interactions of tokens, tiles and goals.

Above all, it's perhaps the element of duality that keeps us so passionate about our journey. It's the duality of balancing animals with habitats. You're overlaying your ideal animal arrangements on your ideal habitats carpet, so something usually has to give way. Completing that bear trio will split up your carefully constructed mountain range. What do you do, sacrifice bears or mountains?

It's that duality that most strikes a chord in me. Because it is a mirror image of my own. The duality of right-brain, left-brain. Of poetry and puzzle, creativity versus reason. My inner reality and out-there reality.

Duality. It's what would do my head in, if my head wasn't so in tune with all this intoxicating charm.

Take, for example, scenario 13 - an unusually puzzly one for me. (Dozens of attempts and I still haven't cracked it, sigh.) Here, hawks are supposed to stick like limpets to elks, but not vice versa. A puzzle 'in extremis', it seems, making animals into a kind of strung-out molecular structure (see the formula E8H5, where E = elk, H = hawk).

Nothing very Cascadian there, right? At the same time, though, there's a wildlife documentary feel about the scene. Picture it: a bunch of hawks ganging up on a herd of elks (maybe they spotted a lame elk calf limping behind?) Those poor elks were just minding their own business, trying to string themselves out to get max points (sorry, that was the puzzle part), then an elite force of visually connected hawks comes swooping down behind their backs.

An echo of natural processes, perhaps? What is that? Poetic puzzliness? Puzzly in Motion?

It's seeking that fusion of disparate elements that keeps us on our trek. Even when the going gets muddy, we still have the innate beauty of Cascadia before us, inviting us to curl and bend its habitats like carpets under the feet of crystalline patterns of animals. It soothes, it rewards, it humbles.

And it challenges.

At least it challenges me. Especially over my view of foxes.

I wish to make a confession.

For decades, I have been a fox-despiser. Bedtime stories like The Gingerbread Man and Pinocchio have left their mark. Foxes have been portrayed as insidious, Machiavellian vagrants, and I have gone along with the drift.

But Cascadia has begun to change all that. It is possible that this game is curing my contempt for foxes.

Not initially, mind. In those early games, the tokens bag seemed to contain nothing but foxes. And like in real life, no one wanted the pesky creatures around. You wanted a hawk or a salmon, but there were two foxes that no one would pick up. Usually two. They were sneaky like that. Three, and they'd go in the bag for replacing. Four, and no questions, off they went. But two?

What was going off inside that bag? Foxes seemed to reproduce there at will and sneakily nose their way into our grasp.

Things though have begun to change. Foxes are still foxes, but I have begun to listen to the hidden consonance of Cascadia. And I hear a deeper, pre-pinocchian truth.

Foxes don't particularly mind what species they hang around. They're not proud, not aloof, like some other animals. They're flexible, they're sociable.

Certainly Cascadia rewards their sociability. How many times lately have I placed a single fox in the middle of the multitude and hit a mini jackpot? I've been finding that I'm getting a decent bunch of points just from careful fox placement. They're fast becoming the key, the vital supporting act.

This is just one example of the change I am undergoing. The acceptance that nature and the game cannot be dictated to or imposed upon. This is not imposition, it's art, it's about coaxing a pattern out of what's happening. Which requires humility, flexibility. Nature can't be shaped to my prejudices, nor to my will.

There's something totally right about the way Cascadia works. It refuses to bend to my schemes; I must bend to its unpredictable ways. It allows the beauty of an unfolding habitat that you're kind of controlling, but which must claim its own logic. How natural that nature won't ever follow my dictates! Nor will elks come out just when I want them! Nor is there always a prefabbed habitat waiting to accommodate my salmon on demand! Nature dictates, I adapt. That's how it should be.

And that's how the game is. You leave it either elated or humbled - and it's difficult to say which is better. Too much elation spoils the boardgamer, as they say.

Thanks to you, designers, for gifting us this beautifully crafted game; for giving our imagination the tools to fly, to dream. For giving us the possibility of a shared journey, the seed of our own Cascadia.

Who knows, we might even visit the real place one of these days ...

Try here for more reviews!

Well stated @ChrisSanderson! Over the past few years, I have been introducing more and more "nature" games into my family's gaming (e.g., Planted, Trekking the National Parks, Wingspan, Cascadia, Verdant...), and the game my wife and I continually pull out - Cascadia. As you so eloquently put, the game blends a nice amount of natural elements with cards and tiles. Who doesn't want to build the perfect habitat (and like you said, visit it!). Cascadia is a nice weight as far as not being too strategic, but taxing enough to get the right combination of animal and environment. Granted in a different mood, a different game will work very well. At the same time, for 2 years, this has been BY FAR our game of choice.

I too want to thank the designers, artists, publishers! And thanks Chris for putting your thoughts to words.

Belated thanks for the encouraging feedback (I have Wingspan on my to-get list). I lost count how many times we've played Cascadia over the last two years. Here's to many more years of playing!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Introduce this to new board gamers

Story Time

There is a store called Second & Charles, kind of like a book, record, RPG, Toy Collecting, Board Gaming kind of store. A little bit of everything in there and then some. But I first saw Cascadia while browsing in there, as well as some surprising games throughout the few years I've shopped there. Games like Undaunted: Normandy and Resist! oddly enough.....

In any case, I saw Cascadia and read it and thought about picking it up but decided against it back then. This had to be about 2020/21. Back then I had way more time to devote to more complicated games so I found it to be a little on the simple side. Plus back then I was real cautious about getting sick so I didn't really invite people over for games, so timing issue with it. Then a buddy of mine that I got re-addicted to board games picked it up about a couple of years later. He had said it was a blast to play with family and friends so I thought about finding a copy but the stores in my local area didn't have it. I went on vacation in Florida and still wasn't able to find it in stores. Funny enough this buddy and I were on vacation together with about 3-4 more families we all mutually knew and we promised that 1 night we would play Cascadia, but it never happened. We instead played Galaxy Trucker which was a hilarious blast and became a HUGE hit with all the families we were on vacation with.

Now at this time, I had Dorfromantik in my collection and I loved it. Review to come later of course! And as I told my friend about it he had said Cascadia was a little bit like Dorfromantik. So vacation was over, drove back home and was looking for deals on Cascadia. Thankfully my wife just bought it and the expansion, Landmarks , as a gift for me! Probably the BEST gift I've ever received by my wife! Kudos and points to her!

Without delay, we played a game and both she and I thoroughly enjoyed it!

Rules

Plain and simple, just how I like my rules. No fluff, just straight to it all. To be honest, the rules felt more complicated than playing the game itself, but the rules cover everything you need to know. But I broke a record teaching this game, it took me less than 5 minutes to explain how it works and if there were any questions, I had instructed my other players to ask them during play, and there were VERY few questions. Now mind you, I've taught Caverna , Rococo , Wingspan and all it's expansions, Dune Imperium , Gloomhaven , Robinson Crusoe and Codex Naturalis just to name very few games in my collection that I've introduced to my newbie board gaming crew. Out of all those, Cascadia was by far the easiest and I really enjoy introducing Wingspan to my friends to the point that other mutual friends want in on these games, but now I'm thinking of introducing Cascadia first to get their feet wet in the hobby. Mostly because it's that easy to teach and it doesn't last too long, and VERY short down time.

Game Flow

Take a tile, take an animal, put it adjacent to an existing tile in your own tableau, put an animal on a tile that allows it. If you have a pine cone, take any combo of tile and animal. Rinse and repeat until the specified number of tiles runs out depending on player count.

Ya, I just taught Cascadia in 2 sentences. Yes there are other things to explain but for the average player, they don't need to know more until the edge cases come. That's how quick the flow is. Now don't get it twisted, simple rules doesn't mean simple game.

Fun Factor

Tons of fun to be had here. There is real strategy on tile selection with animal selection because, if you don't know, the way to score points is to arrange animals in a certain shape based on the cards drawn for each animal. Of which there are several different cards for each animal on how to score in the game, so a lot of variety and a lot of thought on what tile to choose, where to put it and where to put the animal, should you decide to use it.

Yes, lots to think about and strategize and because you only have 1 action to take, down time is super low and we still have time for general chit chat and laughs while we play. Heck, after the tiles are selected, we refill the tile and animal spaces and move on before the previous player places their pieces just because they would have placed it well before their turn comes around again.

If this says anything, right after their first game, I look and read the room of players and they all have the same face each time. They look disappointed because the game is over and then a short awkward silence and I'll ask, "So.....you wanna play another round??" To which all immediately nod and they start resetting the game and talking among themselves about how they know they can do better on the next game. And well....they actually score higher!

For me personally, I find the game fun and challenging enough, but being able to help others be just as excited about board games as I am, that's the fun in it for me. Now I bring it to gatherings when appropriate and if there's some awkward silence, well.....we can always get the party started with Cascadia!

Setup/Tear Down and Footprint

Simple to tear down and footprint is modest. Since each individual player has their own little area to build on, you'll need a slightly bigger table than what you think. My dad played and built a crazy long river so that made me rethink space on the table. My friends made some crazy shapes that required a little bit more space than what we had so I say a modest table and it'll need to be bigger if you get your player count high enough.

Setup I save for last, though it isn't so bad, but playing with the Landmarks expansion does get kind of tedious to shuffle and remove tiles based on player count. Yes, I have maxed out on the player count a few times just because my friends have kids and they are all ages from like 9 to 20 years old and they always want in on the game so I have a little delay on set up to do the maths on how many tiles to remove, counting the final tile count and getting it situated to where everyone can reach the main market area. And during the summer and fall months I've played it irregularly enough to where I need to refresh myself on the tile count each time but that's the only annoyance that I can't get memorized. Plus shuffling the animal cards and getting one picked and situated to where everyone can see it becomes a bit tedious only because we want to get to playing the game already HAHAHA.

Final score

All of that being said, what is the final score? Now for those that don't know, my ratings are based more on fun. Like, how much fun will I have or how often will it get to the table to play? Do I look for opportunities to get it on the table? Or do I make excuses to pass over the game for something else?

Now I do take points off for glaring issues or some annoyances that detract from the game or make it less fun. So what do I score Cascadia??

I give it a whopping 9.9/10!

The 0.1 point is just getting it set up, it's a small chore but it really isn't so bad that that it needs a half point or full point off. That's how minor this annoyance is. The other one was scoring at the end of the game. There's so many ways to score and to count score that boy, it takes a minute to calculate it all. But it's not super bad.

Thoughts

What else can I really say here? Cascadia is a solid game and one that I'm using to introduce others into the hobby. That is a huge win on it's own. People that I've introduced this game and others in my collection had no clue that there were other board games outside of Monopoly our Trouble so when a game like Cascadia gets broken out, I never get tired of seeing minds blown.

It's fun, it's strategic, it's puzzle-y, has a good theme that's serene, and most importantly it is not a brain burner. The expansion is not needed for sure and the only reason I was gifted the expansion was that it was a deal and I knew I would stretch the player count and even with a high player count, it doesn't add that much time. I mean, not much else to say about it, I enjoy playing, I enjoy teaching the game, I enjoy having good times with friends enjoying a game that won't ruin long standing friendships, it's competitive without being ruthless to each other. Call me crazy, but I really steer away from the "Take THAT!" kind of games. I think the only one I have is Dune Imperium that is traditionally competitive, but it's all good fun with Dune to be honest, well balanced. Enough about that.

I know this review is a little shorter than usual but to be honest, not much more needs said about Cascadia.

Trudge on nature peeps! Trudge on!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascading Through My Heart

Hexagons Are Bestagons

I'm feeling a bit blue, to be honest.

Game Name: Cascadia

Publish Year: 2021

Publisher:

Designer:

Artist:

Mechanics: , , , , , , ,

Expansions:

If I had to describe Cascadia in one word, it would be "relaxing." This mechanically simple, yet strategically deep game has an extremely relaxing feel to it, even when playing against others. There's no direct competition until final scoring and even when a piece is taken by another player, there's so much flexibility with how the games is played that I'm never truly upset even if a pair of items that I wanted is gone.

Rear of the box showing internal components.

Cascadia is an absolutely beautiful game and when the tiles and wooden discs are all placed on the table at the end of the game, it makes for an fantastic tableau and the act of tallying up each of the final scores feels more like a journey through the game rather than a fight to who had the best tableau. I feel like I have made the "Hexagons are Bestagons" joke quite a bit on BGG, but there's a reason for why they're the preferred method for tiles in games. The six sided nature of hexagons allows for it to be the shape that fits together the best without requiring extra pieces to fill in gaps as well as providing two more sides than a square to connect to other tiles. They also allow for multi-directional movement of characters in six directions rather than the four that are only available with squares.

Hexagons with linen finish and beautiful artwork? I'm very happy.

It's no wonder that over the last decade or so that we have seen a shift away from square tiles to hexagonal tiles as they are more suited to providing more options for board game designers. Cascadia is no exception to this addition of including hexagonal tiles into the design of the game, and I do have to say that it works out extremely well for the game. The 85 separate six sided tiles are beautifully illustrated and all fit easily into the main box, and are made of quality materials designed to hold up under repeated usage. The five starter biomes are three triangular shaped pieces that are three hexagons that are melded together to form the starting basis of your tableau.

I can't help but make puns, it's in my nature (tokens).

The game also contains multiple cardboard chits designed to look like tiny pinecones, which are named "nature tokens," that act both as a resource and VP for the end of the game. They feature the same style as the artwork on the hexagonal tiles and while they are small, they are easily used and do not present any further complications from their size. They effectively perform the use that they were meant for in acting as a simple resource and source of end-game points, making their minimalistic quality even better.

I love a game with great wooden components.

Additionally, there are three more components contained within the game that I would like to touch upon, especially since with the two previously mentioned components, there are grand total of seven separate component types in the game (including a scorepad for final tallies and the rulebook). My favorite component has to be the wooden discs that feature screen-printed animals on the discs that are then placed on each of the tiles during the game. The distinct coloring of each disc makes it easy to determine what the animal is, as well as featuring the specific animal on both sides of the disc. The choice to use wooden discs over cardboard gives these discs not only the ability to be placed and picked up easily, but also provides a bit more of a tactile and premium feel for the game and the animals that will be utilized throughout the game.

These card backs are minimalistic, but they are excellent for sorting the various objective types.

The second set of components are the tarot-sized animal cards that feature one of four separate scoring objectives for each animal. With the five animals included in the game, there are actually 21 cards as a separate "family scoring" variant card offers an easier way to play with younger children. These scoring cards feature fantastic minimalistic artwork on the rear of the card and beautiful illustrations of the animals, as well as scoring objectives and examples on the front of the card. The simplicity with how each of the objectives is noted makes understanding them very easy and the included letter on the bottom right of the card is paired with the Scenarios included in the rulebook.

The third and final component aside from the rulebook and scorepad, is a beautifully designed cloth bag that is designed to hold each of the wooden animal discs during the game that will allow players to blindly pull new discs and add them to the current tiles/discs available to take for each player. It features a topographical map style pattern that matches the rear of the terrain pieces as well, linking the theme across each of the included parts.

Cloth bag for holding all of the various animal discs.

The included insert is functional, if not a bit frustrating to deal with as most of the pieces don't fit well if just shoved into the included insert. While it's perfectly functional, I can see myself wanting to upgrade the insert with something aftermarket, such as a 3D-Printed insert or third-party insert, to allow the game to be stored better and allow for easier setup. Naturally, this isn't a dealbreaker for me, since I'm probably more focused on inserts than the average player, but it is something to think about when purchasing the game for the first time.

Wildlife Placement

Ruling the various species.

The rules for Cascadia are just as simple as the components contained within and I think that's what lends itself to how good the game feels to play. Each player starts off by taking a random starting tile and placing it in front of them. The number of tiles that is prepped for the table depends on player count, but each player will have 20 separate turns and the number of tiles will reflect how many tiles it takes for that to occur. All tiles are placed in a stack where they can be reached along with the pinecone tokens, and all animal tokens are placed in the included cloth bag.

This objective is certainly bear-able.

Once an objective card has been chosen for each of the five animals (whether it be random or for one of the scenarios, which I'll talk about later), four of each of the landscape tiles are laid out and paired with four animal tokens placed directly above (or below) the tile. Each player, on their turn, chooses one landscape and one animal pair to add to their tableau, attempting to match up terrain with other like terrain (although that isn't necessary) and placing the animal in a habitat that can support them (as noted by the symbols on the terrain). Certain tiles will have a small triangle symbol at the top of the tile indicating that they are a keystone tile and they will have one animal and one habitat on the tile. If a player chooses to place the respective animal on the tile, they then receive a nature token.

Want to go for a long run?

There are several occurrences during the game where the animal tiles can be wiped and replaced with different animals. The first occurrence is when there are four of the same animal type to be selected on the board. This results in the animal type being "overpopulated" and all four animal tokens are removed and replaced with another four animal tokens. This can potentially happen multiple times during a single turn, with each time four tokens being pulled of the same type being removed and replaced. The second potential wipe occurs when three animal tokens of the same type are found on the table and the active player can choose to remove and replace the three animal tokens that are the same type. However, this can only be done once per turn and if another three animals of the same type are pulled, that player is not able to remove and replace them again.

Variant for family play and a fox objective.

With players being required to choose a pair of landscape and animal tiles, this might lead to suboptimal animal placement, so players may choose on their turn to spend a nature token to choose a set of animal and landscape tiles that are not paired with one another. This can only be done once per turn as each turn allows the choice of only one animal and landscape pair to be added to a player's tableau. Additionally a player may choose to spend a nature token to wipe the animals on the board, replacing them with additional animals from the bag. This can be done any number of times as long as a player has the tokens for this.

The various starting tiles to choose from during the game.

Once the game is completed with all players having the opportunity to take 20 turns, final scoring of the game occurs. Scoring for the animals occurs first and players score their grouping of each of the five animals based on the specifications on the cards. This could include having sets of animals in a certain shape, surrounding an animal by other types, or even having a certain number in a row. All players score their landscapes second, counting up the number of interconnected biome tiles. The largest grouping scores additional points for that player and depending on player count, the second largest connected biome might score as well. All remaining nature tokens are also scored for one point each and the player at the end of the game with the highest score is declared the winner.

Building In Replayability

Achievements and more!

As a solo player, I often find that the included solo modes in games feel "tacked on" or not well thought out, requiring a player to beat their own score or have a limited set of time to complete a game. It's perfectly serviceable, but not necessarily something that I usually find myself gravitating towards. I love games that have an automa that I can play against and have to adapt my strategy against, especially since it feels like playing against a person.

Solo rules and clarifications on variants and scoring the animals.

However, Cascadia does something with it's solo mode, and with the multiplayer mode as well, that I really appreciate that pulls me back in to play the game again and again: achievements and scenarios built into the main game. There are fifteen separate scenarios in the main game that can be completed solo or in multiplayer and each has a specific set of objectives for animals and point totals to meet. Some might even sprinkle in paired objectives such as not having a certain type of animal close to another or scoring 7 points for 3 separate biomes in a game. It's a really clever way to bring players back to the game to push for additional replays of the game and the scenarios are challenging enough that players will most likely not finish them on the first attempt.

Various scoring cards set up for a specific scenario. Note the different letters at the bottom right of the cards.

Additionally, there are also multiple achievements that can be completed in multiplayer ranging from having a certain number of points at the end of the game, to only having a specific number of animal types on your board, or even having no keystone habitats. The winner of a multiplayer game is able to choose one of these achievements and mark off the respective shape next to the achievement and then mark off a shape on the achievement tracker. There are additionally new rules to play with and the winner of a game with one of the rules implemented is able to mark a shape on the tracker as well. There are 50 separate achievements to work towards, making this game have quite a bit of draw to play again.

I personally find the solo mode included in Cascadia to be perfect for the game as it has players remove the furthest token/landscape pair from the bag each turn, adding a bit more of a puzzle element to this already strategically deep puzzle game. While there is a fan-made automa for Cascadia, I actually found that the game itself is good enough that it doesn't need the automa to feel fun solo and the included solo mode is well designed for the game. I do wish that there were a separate set of achievements for the solo game, but that is only a minor complaint about the game.

Final Conclusion

The wildlife discs on some of the various tiles that can be found in the game. Yes, that is a fish on a grassland tile.

Overall, I've been very impressed with how good Cascadia plays and how good it feels when I'm playing it. While the game could potentially be stressful if other players take some of the pieces that you want, the relaxed gameplay really allows for an easy time when playing the game. There's something so zen about placing down tiles that match up with another and extend the various biome corridors all while attempting to get the best placement for each of your animals in your corridors. The replayability and the variance of objectives paired with the various scenarios and achievements connected by excellent production of the components of the game, result in a game that is fun to play not only alone, but also with players, both new to the board game realm and those that have been playing games for a while.

The inclusion of the achievements and scenarios also help push the replayability of the game further, by giving players a reason to come back. Those who are completionists especially will find themselves wanting to come back again and again to finish off the 50 separate achievements for the game and up to four separate players can keep track of achievements. It's a clever system and very well implemented with the puzzle nature of Cascadia. While Cascadia's predecessor, , had the same achievement and scenario system, this implementation feels more refined and the gameplay, at least to me, is preferable in Cascadia.

The excellent solo mode and relaxed feel of the game make Cascadia a game that I want to continue coming back to again and again, especially since it's one of the coziest and most beautiful games that I own. This is a must-have for those looking for a relaxing experience and for those looking for a gameplay loop that is both satisfying and feels relaxing at the same time. While a better insert could have been designed and the achievements are multiplayer only, these don't detract too much from the main game and it continues to remain a mainstay of games that I would like to get to the table.

Cascadia earns a 94/100 from me.

Originally posted on the Journey Into the Unknown Blog here on BGG.

How I rate games on my blog: Unlike BGG, I use a 100 point scale for my ratings as I find that more accurately represents the smaller breakdown of numbers as I rate games. With my ratings I use the scoring system that BGG has for the games with a 10 being an outstanding game that I'll want to play over and over again. Most games will fall in the 60-70 point range unless they do anything that stands out greatly to me, pushing them above other games in their genre. Rarely will I award a game lower than a 50, with that being the absolute average of games that I've played. Anything below a 50 will trend to games that I'm not really wanting to play again after one or two plays.

As I am growing and learning as a reviewer, I suspect that my ratings will trend lower along with more games that I play. I do reserve the right to go back to previous reviews and update my rating in the future, but I will ensure that I include a note with that updated rating when that occurs. I will continue to remain as unbiased as possible with my ratings of the games that I have on my blog, but know that personal experience absolutely will have a rating on the games that I rate here on the blog.

Great write up! Cascadia is an amazing game

FYI you can put decimals in your BGG ratings

Also loving this solo mode. Perfect game to play on the coffee table while watching some bad TV. Recently starting going through the achievements as well, extremely simple way to keep me coming back for more. The Landmarks expansion also has its own list of achievements I plan to dip into when the time comes. I wish more games did this type of solo mode, something this easy to manage & interesting, challenging achievements.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia Review (Rolls in the Family)

Originally posted as a video review with extended final thoughts on our Rolls in the Family YouTube channel: Video Review

Overview

In Cascadia, you are building out your own landscape filled with different habitats and wildlife, puzzling everything together to score the most points for large groups of the same terrain and meeting the scoring conditions for each animal type.

Each turn has you selecting one of four pairings, each with one habitat tile and one wildlife token, which are then added to your personal area: habitat tiles adjacent to any existing tile, and wildlife tokens onto any open tile that shows that animal type. A new habitat-wildlife pairing is drawn to replace what was selected, with the occasional clearing of animal tiles when there are too many of the same type.

Once all tiles have been drafted, final scores are determined by scoring how well each player grouped their habitat tiles, as well as how effectively their animals meet the conditions on the corresponding wildlife cards.

Game Feel

The heart of Cascadia is found in the intertwining of two puzzles: trying to group tiles of the same terrain type and arranging the animals on top of those terrains. You are always forced to take a terrain tile and wildlife token that have been paired together, leading to a lot of interesting tradeoffs as you weigh how much you value each of the options that are available.

Each tile that you place limits which animals can be placed there in the future, so you are always thinking ahead to how you can keep the second layer of the puzzle flexible. At the same time, you don’t want to waste any turns, so you are always trying to select an animal that you are currently able to place.

Inevitably, there will be times when none of the pairings work well for you, but the game gives you a tool in the form of “nature tokens” that can be acquired when an animal is placed on specific keystone tiles. While you can hold onto these for a point at the end of the game, it is often more valuable to spend them for the powerful abilities of either selecting a tile and animal that are not paired together or replacing the animals with new ones from the bag.

There is a certain element of push-your-luck as you decide how flexible to keep your animal-placement options, and how aggressively to pursue high-scoring wildlife arrangements that may require many of one type of animal. It is often players who can balance keeping their options open with optimizing placements across both layers of the puzzle that come out on top.

FAQ

Player Counts - Cascadia plays well from two to four players, and if you want to get more of your puzzling fix, there is also a solid solo mode.

Abstract vs. Thematic - The inviting nature theme is certainly helpful when introducing the game to new players, and there are some clever ways the theme is evoked in the wildlife scoring conditions, but it is mostly window dressing on a dual-layered spatial puzzle.

Luck vs. Skill - While the turn-by-turn decisions are simple and the pairings are drawn randomly, there is a lot of room to optimize your scoring and have skillful play determine the victor at the end of the game.

Multiplayer Solitaire vs. Highly Interactive - There are some hints at interaction with the habitat scoring at the end of the game, but there is no doubt that almost the entirety of the game is focusing on building your own independent puzzle in front of you.

Short Setup vs. Long Setup - There is a little bit of setup as you remove tiles based on the number of players, but still relatively quick to get playing.

Easy to Teach vs. Hard to Teach - Cascadia’s low rule complexity is one of its big strengths in introducing it to new players, but there are still a handful of modern mechanisms here that need to be understood.

Low Setup Variability vs. High Setup Variability - Each game of Cascadia is going to feel fairly similar, but there is some nice variety from the different wildlife scoring conditions and the randomly drawn tiles ensure your landscape develops differently each time you play.

Things to Like

Paired Drafting Provides Fun Tradeoffs - The drafting in Cascadia always requires you to take a tile and an animal together, a decision that is more interesting and nuanced than selecting just one in isolation. You are always assessing the value of two pieces to determine the overall value of the pair which adds a nice complexity, but the inclusion of only four pairs keeps the decision space from feeling like too much.

Crunchy Dual-Layered Puzzle - Every decision you make is with two different puzzles in mind, and there is a lot of satisfaction that can come from optimizing both layers of the puzzle simultaneously. That optimization feels tight since, if you always play your wildlife token, you will only ever have three available spaces that do not already have an animal. This also has the nice side effect of making the game easier for players that don’t perfectly optimize; a missed wildlife token permanently increases the number of open tiles you will have available at any given time.

As Thinky As You Want It To Be - One of the key reasons Cascadia appeals to a wide range of players is its flexibility in gameplay depth. Casual players can enjoy simply selecting pairs and building their landscape without the pressure to perfectly optimize habitats and wildlife, while more strategic players can focus on maximizing every decision for a more complex, "thinky" experience. The game even works well with younger kids, as the rules are straightforward, and there's little risk of them forgetting or breaking core mechanics, even if they don’t fully optimize their scoring opportunities.

Variety in Wildlife Cards - And for a game that is easy to get to the table with a variety of groups, it is a huge benefit to have different versions of the wildlife scoring that you can mix up from game to game. A lot of the variations feel very similar, but it is just enough to keep the experience fresh over repeated plays.

Things to Dislike

Eyeing Terrain Majorities Can Be Tedious - Since the terrain bonuses can have a big impact on scoring, strategic players will want to be aware of how they compare to other players. However, this means a lot of looking across the table and trying to count tiles, which can not only slow down the game, but can make players feel like they’d rather just “wing it” and see what happens, even at the expense of optimal strategic play.

Our Ratings

Ryan (10 Plays) -  8

Daniel (9 Plays) -  8.5

Watch Extended Final Thoughts

Is It For You?

If you want meaningful player interaction or aren’t drawn to crunchy spatial puzzles, then Cascadia might not be for you.

But if you want an accessible and broadly appealing puzzle game that is quick to teach and play and gives players the flexibility to think as little or as deeply as they prefer, then Cascadia is an excellent choice.

Subscribe to the Rolls in the Family review GeekList for more reviews like this.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Playing with a 5 year old

My son turned five in March and has recently started asking to play games with me. He, like most kids, loves animals, so I thought cascadia with the family variant could work with enough practice. To my amazement, he needed little help by the second game.

I made one minor adjustment to the rules, which was that the pinecones were only to allow us to select non-overlapping habitats and animals, and I'll add that he can wipe the animals at a later time. But, he did well matching the habitats, and telling him that the animals needed friends helped with putting the animals together. The only thing he struggled with was creating stranded animals or putting too many together where he wasn't getting points for them, so while we tried the intermediate (points on 2, 3, and 4+), he lost a lot of points on single animals, so we will stick with the family variant for now.

A couple notes for others with young kids. Each game for us was about 30-35 minutes, and he was engaged the whole time (something I couldn't say about when we tried forbidden island). He is also scoring in the 80s, so the family variant really does get him into real scores (I haven't played enough to know what good scores are).

My plan is to introduce the A scoring cards one at a time, after we've played enough where he doesn't need any help, which we're already surprisingly down to just a few times a game.

When I first played this I gave it a 7.5/10. Fun, good game for playing while my wife and I watch a show at night. But a game I can enjoy and play with a five year old who also enjoys it and needs little help, and I can watch him think critically about a turn? 9/10.

As a funny ending to our two plays yesterday, he then asked if we can play Ark Nova…

This is wonderful. Thanks so much for sharing! Adapting the Family & Intermediate rules so they work for the kids you are playing with is a great way to go.

Well thank you for designing such a great game! It's really cool that we can all play at the family level and it can still be challenging to play well! Looking forward to Cascadia:Rolling!

Coming Soon:

Playing with a 5 year old - Ark Nova review

Do you seriously doubt a 5yo could play Cascadia? In my experience plenty of kids can play this and other games, some even more complex games, if self-motivated. What I find interesting is that I’ve seen these kids, not just my own, play well enough with family but they are too distracted to play these games alone with other kids even kids with similar gamer backgrounds. I ran an elementary school board game club and it was fascinating to observe.

These are NOT genius kids, but they do tend to be kids who can focus for long stretches. They may also not play as optimally as adults — though I have seen a couple 2nd to 6th graders who could legit smoke adults at certain games.

I doubt a 5yo could play Ark Nova optimally but I bet a few focused and motivated ones could start to grok a few rules and play with adults — if only to mix things up for the adults. They do not have to play perfectly to have a wonderful time with you or you with them.

One thing we do with our 5 year old is we pick scoring cards like normal and he gets points from which is higher. The selected point cards or the basic family cards. This way the adults can enjoy the puzzle and the kid has a fighting chance.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia - WhatBoardGame.com Review

Original review with pics and score here - https://www.whatboardgame.com/post/cascadia-board-game-revie...

“Cascadia, you’re breaking my heart, you’re shaking my confidence daily.” Yep, another review and another song stuck in my head (it’s Cecilia by Madness if you’re wondering.) Why do I feel the need to keep mentioning these? Well in the hope that they leave my head and transfer onto the next poor soul who hears it, much like the video in The Ring.

How to cascade.

Give everyone a random starting habitat tile and then remove a certain number of regular habitat tiles at random depending on player count. Place the rest of the tiles in face down piles and put four tiles in a row face up, then take four wildlife tokens from the bag and place one underneath each tile. If they happen to be four of the same then set them aside and draw again. Choose one of each of the wildlife scoring cards and set them where everyone can see them. For your first game at least it’s suggested to use the set A cards.

On your turn choose one set of tile and wildlife tokens in the display and add them to your environment. Tiles will have some terrain types on it as well as some animal types depicted on it. When you place your tile it can go anywhere in your environment as long as at least one side is fully touching an already existing tile. You don’t have to place matching terrain types next to each other but since end game scoring involves scoring your largest terrain areas it’s good if you can. You'll then add your animal token to your environment. It can go on any tile in your environment that has a matching animal on it. Once the token is placed it can’t be moved and no other tokens can be placed there. Then replace the tile and token you took and then onto the next player's turn. If there are four of the same animal tokens in the display they are immediately replaced. If there are three of the same. then the active player can choose to replace the three identical ones.

If the tile you place your token on has only one animal type on it you can take a nature token. These can be spent on your turn to either replace any of the animal tokens in the display or you can use it to take any combination of tile and token and not just the set ones.

The game will end when you have no more tiles left to refresh the display. You’ll score one point for each tile in your largest terrain area of each terrain type. Then the player with the largest area in each terrain type will score bonus points. Then you’ll score for the wildlife cards.

Each animal has its own scoring conditions and you get points depending on those cards. For example, in the set A cards the elks will score for how many and you have in a straight line, the hawks don’t want any other hawk adjacent to them and the bears want to be in pairs with no other bears adjacent to them. Lastly you’ll get one point for each nature token you haven’t used.

Grin and bear it

We talk a lot in board gaming about welcoming games, or gateways games, or games that we show to people that will introduce them to this fun, but also addictive and financially crippling hobby that we call board games. A lot of gamers have in their arsenal (other football teams are available) a few of these types of games that they’ll recommend or take to a family gathering to play in place of that Christmas relationship crushing stalwart Monopoly. Just invoking that name I can already hear families gearing up for an argument. The reason I mention all this is because Cascadia is going to be a game that I'm going to be adding to my particular gateway repertoire.

Cascadia will lull you into a false sense of security. The process of teaching or being taught it is a simple affair and will probably have you thinking “right we’ll crash out a quick game of this, nothing too thinky and then get onto the really crunchy stuff”, and then the puzzle hits you like being hit on the head with the hammer from Mallets Mallet (there's my obscure British TV reference for this review.) Now granted, that was a foam hammer but it’s still relevant because even though Cascadia presents you with a nice puzzle, it’s still not a particularly complex game. It’s currently sitting at a weight of 1.83 / 5 on Board game geek, if you put any stock in those ratings. It does however give you something that maybe you weren’t expecting from the rule’s explanation and I love when games surprise me like that and you can see it come to life as you play.

Cascadia gives you a lovely combination of things to mull over as you survey the choices of tokens and tiles.

Trying to navigate those animal tokens to score as much as you can on as many of those cards as you can would be puzzling enough on most games of this weight. In fact if you play with the family or intermediate variant then that’s pretty much what you'll be getting. It’s this wonderful juggling act as you're constantly trying to set up a scoring opportunity and all the while trying to keep enough space so you can set up some others later down the line. It’s a spatial puzzle in the same vein as a polyomino game and managing to slot that last piece in place is just as satisfying as any of those types of games.

Terrain scoring really adds that extra crunch to the game that, in combination with everything else, really makes this a game that anyone, regardless of your gaming experience can latch onto.

Each round you’ll be agonising over whether you should take a combination for its tile or for its animal token as you wait for that rare instance of the perfect combo coming out. Like seeing an outfit that you like on a shop dummy and then seeing all of it in your shop in your size. That’s where the nature tokens come in and these are like tiny pine cone saviours that you want to hoard like a hungry squirrel (do squirrels hoard pine cones?) They add just enough mitigation to stop the game becoming as frustrating as it could potentially be if you were constantly only getting unfavourable combos.

Getting the most out of your Elks

If there’s one thing you won’t be short of in Cascadia is replayability. With four scoring cards of each animal type that can be used in any combination, you're already looking at, hold on, 1, 2, carry the six, er…….. a lot of games before you’ve been through the various combinations. Then factor in the random tile set up and then all the different tile/ animal tile combinations and you could easily be playing this game until such a time that you actually manage to get some real Elk to stand in a straight line. If you hadn't guessed that would probably be never, which puts a stop to my pitch for a real life version of Cascadia. That and the fact that fish aren’t exactly known for being responsive to instructions. They’re too busy chanting to Bob which I presume is their god.

Vast amounts of replayability of course is only necessary if you find yourself needing the variety. The first five or six times I played Cascadia it was with the set A cards and even after all those plays I didn’t feel that I particularly needed to dive into the other cards. I have played with a few different cards since then and they’re as much fun as the regular cards and even having one different is enough to add a bit of variety to each game.

There’s a family variant which uses just one catch all scoring card and if you’d like they even have an achievements track which you can throw in for multiplayer or solo which serves as another level of competition, especially if you play with the same group. The solo mode itself is nice and simple to run and works on a “score as high as you can and compare to the table” style system. Again changing your scoring cards and even going for those achievements can change up the longevity of the solo game.

Cascadia is a catch all type of game that’s gonna stay in my collection ready to be taken off the shelf at a moment's notice to be played in any situation. It’s light enough to be a great family game but puzzly enough that it's going to give the old grey matter a workout regardless of your gaming experience.

"Cecilia" was best performed by the original artists, the incomparable Simon and Garfunkle. The song was actually written by Paul Simon. And please don't "OK Boomer" me.

Nice review! I'm also several plays in and am yet to feel any temptation to swap out the scoring cards. I love the level of grok-ability this game sits at while also presenting a challenging puzzle if you want to maximise your points. I appreciate that they included some variation for people that want it, but the vast majority of the time I'll be keeping the game at its wonderfully approachable default.

The only point I'll contend with you on is that if you like this, you'll like Calico. This is the game I wanted Calico to be, and I hope that cat never comes back.

Michael Kandrac

@Gamegrunt

"Cecilia" was best performed by the original artists, the incomparable Simon and Garfunkle. The song was actually written by Paul Simon. And please don't "OK Boomer" me.

I knew it was a cover but it don’t think I’ve heard the original. I went with the version I knew and that was all over the radio at the time

John F

@aldarez

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Thanks. Haha yeah, I’ve played Calico a couple of times, it definitely a good puzzle but this gives you a lot more freedom so if you do mess up a placement you can just set up something somewhere else, it’s a lot more chill in that respect

Steve Godfrey

@Stevig77

Michael Kandrac

@Gamegrunt

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Well, it's really off topic but I feel prompted to make a simple note. I had no idea at all that an alternate existed . . . and the version familiar to me was indeed all over the radio at the time.

Tomello

@TVis

Steve Godfrey

@Stevig77

Michael Kandrac

@Gamegrunt

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Well, it's really off topic but I feel prompted to make a simple note. I had no idea at all that an alternate existed . . . and the version familiar to me was indeed all over the radio at the time.

I don’t think Suggs/ Madness (the band he sang with) were really known in America so it probably didn’t get released over there. It was alright, just one of those ear worms that was everywhere at the time haha

Love Cascadia, hate either version of Cecilia

Daniel Williams

@valenswift

Love Cascadia, hate either version of Cecilia

fair enough

To be clear, I own the game and have 6 whole plays under my belt. I thought it a bit dry at first, but it's growing on me.

===RESEÑA===

Título: How Does Cascadia Hold Up, and Do You Need the Expansion?

Note: This review originally appeared on Rolling Doubles. To see the full review with images please follow the link, and thank you for your support!

Grizzlies and Salmon and Elk, oh my! What do a couple of Pacific Northwesterners think about this puzzle game celebrating our region? Also, how does the expansion stack up to the original? Let’s find out together!

What we Loved

Brad: Normally I’m not a big fan of abstract/puzzle games, but Cascadia is structured enough that I find it to be quite fun. Knowing all my scoring objectives upfront helps me focus, and I can usually pick up pretty quickly which goals I can achieve and which aren’t going to work given the tiles and tokens I’m drawing. I also love the replayability, with landscapes taking on (literal) new shapes every time we play and no two games ever feeling the same.

As Barbara mentions below this is also a great game for newer or more casual players, and we’ve used it as a “gateway game” more than once. While I tend to lean towards heavier games most of the time, I love that Cascadia is a game we can play with just about anyone, and sometimes it sparks that interest in playing more complex games.

Barbara: I love a pretty game about animals! It’s a great puzzle tableau builder and while competitive, it’s low conflict. You might steal something somebody else wanted but it’s generally not that bad and whenever it happens to you it’s fairly easy to recover your strategy or make a quick pivot. The wooden animal discs have a great feel and all of the tiles and colors are very attractive. It’s a good game for newer gamers and is very approachable. It’s also a good short game and you can easily shuffle all the tiles and tokens and dive right in for another game if you want.

What We Hated (or Loved Slightly Less)

Barbara: There were not a lot of goals in the original. They got old pretty quick, and I like that there are new ones in the expansion. That being said, other than the new goals I don’t think the expansion is necessary. It isn’t bad but I don’t find that it adds a lot for me. Grab it if you want more diversity in end-game scoring, but don’t be surprised if the rest underwhelms.

Brad: I agree that the expansion isn’t necessary, while it adds more to the game the new Landmarks content doesn’t really grab me in a meaningful way. It provides an additional way to score points by focusing on the environments alongside the work on animals, but I mostly find it distracting and often not worth meaningfully pursuing. It’s typically more incidental than part of any intentional strategy, which is a bit of a bummer.

Final Thoughts and Verdict

Brad: I think the base game of Cascadia is brilliant fun for any number of players and can’t recommend it highly enough. That being said, Landmarks is a bit of a letdown in my estimation and mostly only necessary for the additional animal objective cards. If that’s not enough to separate you from your cash, then you can steer clear.

Barbara: I have nothing different to add from my other half! On this we are in complete and rare agreement!

Verdict

Cascadia Base Game: A Treat for Two!

Cascadia Landmarks Expansion: Decent, but Unnecessary

Good review. One of the things I don't think you touched on are the new Landscape tiles from the Landmarks expansion. I really like how they change things up. Not only are there new Keystone tiles, now with more than one landscape type on them, but there are new landscape tiles with \*three\* different landscapes on them, allowing for new and interesting combinations when building your landscape. That is one of the things I enjoy quite a bit about the expansion (along with the new Wildlife scoring cards and the Landmarks themselves, of course).

I see you specialize in two player games, so this last point may not be as relevant for you, but... Our group regularly hits five players, so the additional components for up to six player games comes in handy. But with larger player count games, downtime sometimes becomes an issue. The expansion fixes that problem though, through the new fast play variant. It gives you a personal pool of tile/ token combinations, allowing you to take five of your 20 turns during other player's turns, thereby shaving 25% off of the game time. Note that this variant can be incorporated into just the base game as well, and at any player count (including two player) as it doesn't require any additional components.

Cheers!

James R. Gracen

@CavemanLogic

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Cheers!

Great note on the additional landscape tiles! We don't specifically notice them, but you're right that it's always nice to have more opportunities to match up your habitats and not start grumbling about how that really sweet river you were working on just got totally cut off.

We've never tried the fast play variant since we mostly play this game at two, but great to know that the designers considered how to minimize downtime with more players. Semi-related, we LOVE almost everything Board & Dice publishes, but almost never get their games out when friends come over because there's just SO MUCH WAITING between turns. We're always in support of anything that makes the games go quicker!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Different every time - The Board Game Family review

We really enjoy tile-laying board games.

Whether we’re building out our own areas like in Barenpark or adding to a central area like in Carcassonne, we love creating a unique arrangement every time. No matter whether we win or not, we feel accomplished seeing what we’ve made.

That’s one reason we were drawn to Cascadia when it was first published in 2021 by Flatout Games.

We were also drawn to the gameplay and the wonderful theme of habitats and wildlife of the Pacific Northwest.

And after having played it numerous times, we’re happy to report that Cascadia knocks it out of the park on all accounts!

How to play Cascadia

The objective in Cascadia is to gain the most points by building beautiful habitat for various wildlife that each score in their own, unique ways.

Each player starts with a random 3-hex habitat tile that shows all 5 habitat types (Mountains, Forests, Prairies, Wetlands, Rivers) and all 5 wildlife types (Bear, Salmon, Elk, Hawk, Fox). Each starting tile has a different layout of those elements.

Randomly select 1 Wildlife Scoring Card for each of the 5 wildlife and place them face up. These cards indicate how each of the different animals will score for this game.

Reveal 4 Habitat Tiles and place them in a central row. Then draw 4 Wildlife Tokens from the bag and place them one at a time next to a habitat tile.

Player Turns

On a player’s turn, they select a Habitat Tile and Wildlife Token pair and play them in their own growing environment.

The player first places their new tile adjacent to any tile already in their environment. When doing so, the player does not need to match up the habitat types. It may be beneficial to do so for scoring, but it is not required.

Then the player places their Wildlife Token on an available tile in their environment. The type of animal placed must match the symbol on the tile. Some tiles show multiple animal types. Any of the pictured animals may be placed there. However, once placed, it may not be moved nor can any other animal be placed on that tile.

If the player places the animal on a tile that shows only a single animal type, they receive a Nature Token.

On future turns, players may use their Nature Tokens to do one of the following:

1. Take any of the available Habitat Tiles and any of the available Wildlife Tokens. They do not need to be paired.

2. Wipe any number of Wildlife Tokens and replace them.

Players may use as many Nature Tokens as they would like on their turn.

At the end of a player’s turn, they draw a new Wildlife Token and reveal a new Habitat Tile to create a new pairing.

Players continue taking turns until there are no more Habitat Tiles to replace the one taken that turn. Each player will have had 20 turns.

Scoring

Once the game ends, players total up their points.

\* Wildlife: Review each Wildlife Scoring Card and total points based on that particular configuration in your environment. For example, Salmon score for continuous lines while Elk score for grouping patterns.

\* Habitat: For each habitat type, players score 1 point per tile for their largest contiguous corridor of that habitat.

\* Habitat Bonus: The largest contiguous corridor of each habitat also awards bonus points for the players with the largest of that habitat.

\* Nature Tokens: Receive 1 point for each unused Nature Token.

The player with the most points wins!

There are also a few variants listed in the rule book. One is a Solo mode where you can play the game alone and see how your rank in the end. Another is a Family Variant where instead of using the various wildlife scoring cards, you use a single scoring card where every animal will score based on the size of their grouping.

Can the whole family enjoy Cascadia?

Cascadia is a fantastic family board game.

The basic rules are easy to learn and there’s a great balance of strategy and luck. The tricky part is keeping track of the various ways your wildlife with score and choosing the right pair of habitat and wildlife to take to add to your growing environment each turn. Plus, with each turn, you’ll have even more options of where to build out your environment.

And because of this puzzly nature of the game, we agree with the recommended age of 10+ for players.

There are many reasons why we love playing Cascadia.

For starters, we love the theme and how well it ties to the gameplay. We really enjoy building out a unique environment every single time. It’s beautiful to look at and see what we’ve created by the end of the game. And it’s fun to see how differently everyone else builds out theirs too.

And no matter how much you want to, you won’t be able to score high for every wildlife and every habitat. You’ll have to make sacrifices and tradeoffs throughout the game.

Which brings us to another thing we love – the choices.

While taking a habitat and wildlife pair and placing them each turn isn’t much to do on your turn, it can cause quite the consternation when you’re balancing the various things you want to do to score points.

To do well, you’ll have to keep in mind 5 different ways of scoring the wildlife. Then you’ll have to choose the right pair from the central area and place them in a valuable location. On every turn, you’ll have 3 open habitat where you can place an animal. However, if you don’t plan ahead, you may get stuck with those 3 spaces only showing 1 or 2 types of wildlife – thus seriously curtailing your options.

That’s where it’s great to make sure you have Nature Tokens on hand. With those, you can break the need to pick a matched pair of habitat and wildlife on your turn and can choose any of the 4 available.

We also love when a game includes variety.

With Cascadia, that comes in the form of scoring the various wildlife. There are 4 ways to score each of the 5 types of wildlife. And in each game, you randomly select one of those ways for each animal.

Which means that every time you play, you’ll be trying to arrange your wildlife in different patterns. It’s fun puzzle to figure out.

We also find that in most of our games, the final scores are pretty close. We may have to sacrifice points for one animal in order to do well with another. While our opponents may be doing just the opposite. But in the end, we all come out pretty close.

There’s also a tile in the game that we get a kick out of every time. The various habitat tiles are pretty balanced on which wildlife are depicted on them. This includes the tiles showing a single animal. And the one that makes us laugh each time it comes up is the prairie habitat with a single salmon on it. (We think that salmon might be dead.) We call that the “Desert Salmon”.

In fact, because we’ve joked about it so much, we’ve come to even call the game “Desert Salmon”. Instead of asking mom if she wants to play Cascadia, we ask if she wants to play “Desert Salmon”. Inevitably, she’ll laugh and say, “okay”.

And if you need any more convincing that Cascadia is a great board game to play with your family, it won the 2022 Spiel des Jahres for board game of the year!

How does Cascadia score on our “Let’s Play Again” game meter?

Cascadia board gameCascadia scores very high on our “let’s play again” game meter!

We’ve played games back-to-back many times because of how much we enjoy playing. Plus, the game is very easy to reset to play again. Just flip over all the tiles, shuffle them around, places all the wildlife tokens back in the bag, randomly select a scoring card for each animal and we’re ready to play again.

The only catch in playing games back-to-back is making sure to reset your brain on how each animal will score in the new game. Yes, we’ve been caught putting animals in patterns that would have scored well in the previous game because we’ve forgotten they’re now scoring different in the current game. So just make sure you’re on top of that!

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A list of all our family board game and card game video reviews can also be found on BGG in this Family Video Reviews GeekList.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Gaming with children aged 14 to 16 - Cascadia

This review is part of my series of reviews of how games have worked with my children, now aged 8 to 12. For the full list see: My children's game reviews - children aged between 2 and 16.

Fun Components:

I wouldn't say the components in this are particularly "fun", but they are attractively produced, with animals printed on the wooden tokens, good artwork on the goal cards and attractive landscapes. There aren't any components that would give that extra appeal to children, but it's certainly an attractive game.

Simplicity of rules:

This game excels from simplicity of rules - the basic idea of you take a tile and token and place them, and that tokens have to be placed as shown, while landscapes don't have to match but score more when they do, is very easy to explain in seconds. The various scoring goals are different difficulties, but because the A cards are easy, and the B cards also fairly easy, you have a nice entry level there, before you show the more advanced scoring tiles. The rules surrounding fir cones are the only thing that is more complex, and that's still not really hard to explain. The scoring for landscapes does confuse people more than I expect, mainly I think because they don't see that part of scoring, only I do, as the person who actually scores, so they forget the details of how it works.

Randomness/Strategy:

One of the complains of this game by the kids initially was that my husband and I always won - there isn't enough luck in it that an experienced player won't beat a beginner every time. Having said that though, it is a game where kids can have fun pursuing wacky strategies, which always appeals to my youngest - the most birds with line of sight, the best scoring foxes possible etc. And for the oldest, who likes goals to work for, there are clear scoring goals to aim for, even if there is randomness as to when the animals he wants will appear to fill in those gaps!

Did the children enjoy it?

This is a weird one, because when I suggest it they'll say "Oh yes, I remember that one, that's quite fun, yes we can play that", and they'll happily play it and enjoy it. However, they will never choose it themselves, so it doesn't actually come out all that often with them. I think it's just a bit too dry, without a theme that shines through and draws them in, or with quite enough variety between plays to make them want to play again.

And how is it from the adult's point of view? ;halfstar:

I think I feel about this game fairly similarly to the kids - I enjoy it when I play it, but it's not a game I'm desperate to play again between plays, or spend a great amount of time thinking about afterwards. Not deep enough for that extra level of thought, but a nice enjoyable quicker game when you're wanting something you don't have to think about too much. I do enjoy playing it with the children though, just because it rattles along so quickly, without anyone spending ages overthinking their moves, and also because of the slightly more unusual strategies they pursue.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Keep or Cull Review: Cascadia

Keep or Cull was a review series I started (and completed) in 2024 where I played through some of the games I owned and decided whether to keep or cull them. I've got my collection down to a size that I'm happy with now, so I consider this project to be complete! Thanks to everyone that followed along.[/i]

Cascadia

In a Nutshell: A beautiful, thinky tile-laying game

I am not the biggest fan of tile-laying games, but one of the first games we tried for this Keep or Cull project was Leaf, and I really enjoyed it. Of course, one of the most popular tile-laying games right now is the subject of today’s review. I’m glad that I decided to give Cascadia a second look. I don’t know if I like tile-laying more than I thought I did, or perhaps I’m just playing some of the best ones… but Cascadia was a hit in our house.

You build out a habitat and populate it with animals. Each turn, you select a habitat tile and an accompanying animal token from a set of four options. Only certain animals can inhabit each habitat tile (indicated on the tile itself). You score points at the end of the game for the size of your habitats, as well as for grouping each type of animal within the set parameters for that game. For example, bears might need to be in pairs, foxes score based on how many different animals surround them, salmon needs to be in a line, etc. The more pairs you make, the longer your line of creatures, the more points you get for each animal type.

Solitaire?

Is this a solitaire experience? It can be, if that’s the kind of group your game with. Normally, I’m not a fan of those kinds of games (hence why tile-laying isn’t my favorite usually), but I found this game more enjoyable when I just focused on my board. Sure, I could try to trip up my wife by using a nature token to take that mountain tile she needs, along with the seemingly near-extinct salmon that just appeared, but… I’ve got STUFF TO DO.

There were certainly times when I knew my wife was not paying attention to what I was doing because it would have been very easy to trip me up, but she felt the same way too.

It’s just nice.

You can play this game mean, I guess. But I have “mean games” already. This one is just nice to play nicely. We had a sort of unspoken agreement that we were only taking the tiles and tokens that we needed. At the end of the game, it was fun to see who won, but it was also just fun to see what we had both built.

Endless variability.

With different starting tiles, variable animal scoring tiles used, and even a couple of variants, Cascadia will feel a little different every time you play it. It’s a different puzzle on every play. I saw that an expansion was just released, but I think there’s enough replayability in the base box to keep us coming back over and over.

Keep or Cull?

Verdict: KEEP

Replaces: Leaf

When we finished Cascadia, my wife said, “I liked that better than Leaf. This is the first time that a game we have played during this project is replacing another game we have played during this project. PROGRESS!

Our goal is just to keep one or two games in each genre, and since my wife is more into tile-laying games than I am, I’m differing to her on this one. Leaf joins the “trade” list and Cascadia finds a permanent place on the shelf- at least, until we find another tile-layer in the collection that we like more! I suspect that this game has gotten so popular for a reason, though.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia, durch Bordspelwereld [DE]

Die Tatsache, dass ich Anfang der Woche keine Zeit hatte, etwas zu schreiben, gibt mir das Gefühl, dass ich die ganze Woche herumgelaufen bin. Letztes Wochenende war ich mit meiner Familie in Cascadia.

Für mich das zweite Mal, für sie das erste Mal. Lies: Ich habe das Spiel gespielt, mich verliebt, es gekauft und während des Familienwochenendes versucht, meine Familie mit dem Kachelverlegungsvirus zu indoktrinieren. Warum ich seit diesem Wochenende an mir selbst zerbreche, dazu kommen wir gleich. Aber fangen wir ganz von vorne an.

Cascadia ist kein neues Spiel. White Goblin Games hat es bereits 2022 herausgebracht, und es hat bei den niederländischen Spielepreisen sofort den Preis in der Kategorie Familie gewonnen. Ich werde später erklären, warum dies meiner Meinung nach völlig gerechtfertigt ist. Cascadia ist ein Spiel von Randy Flynn. Ich musste den besten Mann durch die Google-Maschine laufen lassen, und so weit ich sehen kann, ist Cascadia sein Debüt. Wahre Kenner mögen mich korrigieren. Es verheißt Gutes für die Zukunft, wenn dies Ihr Einstieg in die Welt der Spiele ist.

In Cascadia können Sie Punkte erzielen, indem Sie Sechseckplättchen geschickt aneinander legen, um mit Kombinationen aus Tieren und deren Lebensräumen zu punkten. In jedem Zug können Sie eine Kombination aus einem Plättchen (das sowohl verschiedene Lebensräume als auch ein oder mehrere Tiere darstellt) und einem Tierplättchen wählen. Die Tierplättchen werden auf Plättchen gelegt, auf denen das Tier abgebildet ist. Nur auf diesen Plättchen darf das Tier platziert werden. Dies kann entweder auf das gerade gelegte Plättchen oder auf ein früheres Plättchen mit dem Tier sein.

Da man mit einem Startplättchen beginnt, das aus drei zusammenhängenden Plättchen besteht, hat man während des Spiels immer vier Plättchen, auf die man ein Tierplättchen legen kann. Sie können also nur dann eine Kombination aus Plättchen und Tierplättchen wählen, wenn Sie ein freies Plättchen haben, auf dem das Tier der gewählten Kombination liegt. Man muss das Tier auch platzieren können. Auf jedem Plättchen befindet sich nur ein Tiermarker, auch wenn sich mehrere Tiere auf dem Plättchen befinden. Du erhältst Punkte für die Kombination von Tierplättchen und für die Größe der verschiedenen Arten von Gebieten, die du mit deinen Plättchen bildest. Für jede Art von Gebiet erhalten Sie außerdem Bonuspunkte, wenn Sie bei der Endauszählung das größte Gebiet haben. Wie hoch diese sind, hängt von der Anzahl der Spieler ab.

Die verschiedenen Lebensräume sind Feuchtgebiete, Flüsse, Berge, Prärien und Wälder. Für diese Gebiete gibt es keine Platzierungsregeln. Jedes Gebiet kann gegen jedes Gebiet spielen, aber das ist natürlich nicht klug, wenn man Punkte sammeln will, denn bei der Endauszählung erhält man nur von jedem Gebietstyp, also dem größten Gebiet, Punkte. Pro Plättchen, aus dem das Gebiet besteht, erhält man dann einen Punkt.

Die Wertung der Tierplättchen ist ein bisschen ausgeklügelter und ziemlich genial, wenn Sie mich fragen. Im Spiel gibt es etwa fünf Tierarten: Der Grizzlybär, der Roosevelt-Wapiti (auch Hirsch genannt), der Chinook-Lachs, der Rotschwanzbussard und der Rotfuchs. Wie diese Tiere punkten, hängt von den Wertungskarten ab, die du vor dem Spiel ziehst. Für jedes Tier gibt es vier verschiedene Wertungskarten. Daraus ergeben sich 20 verschiedene Wertungsszenarien/Kombinationen. Die Wertungskarten haben unterschiedliche Wertungsmechanismen, so dass es auch hier Variationen gibt.

In meinen ersten beiden Partien haben wir die in der Spielregel empfohlenen Szenarien gespielt, was der Ausgangspunkt dieser Rezension ist, aber keineswegs die einzige korrekte oder existierende Kombination, sondern als Beispiel zu sehen ist.

Der Grizzlybär punktet, indem er immer zwei Grizzlybären nebeneinander platziert. Ein dritter oder vierter Bär macht die Kombination wertlos. Je mehr dieser Kombinationen es gibt, desto mehr sind sie wert. Die Hirsche erhältst du, indem du sie in geraden Reihen nebeneinander legst. Je länger die Reihe ist, desto mehr Punkte gibt es. Du kannst bei der Endauszählung mehrere Reihen haben, aber jedes Reh darf nur in einer Reihe zählen. Von den Chinook-Lachsen muss eine möglichst lange Girlande gebildet werden, die nicht in einer geraden Linie verlaufen muss, aber sie müssen nebeneinander liegen. Es dürfen nie 3 Lachse nebeneinander liegen, du darfst also keine scharfe Kurve machen. Je länger dein Pendellachs ist, desto mehr Punkte gibt es, und das kann sich ganz schön summieren! Der Bussard ist nicht der schwierigste. Er darf einfach nicht an einen anderen Bussard angrenzen. Je mehr Bussarde, desto mehr ist jeder einzelne wert. Für den Fuchs bekommst du maximal 6 Punkte. Für jede andere Art, mit der man ihn umgibt, gibt es einen Punkt. Auch der Fuchs selbst zählt.

Das Spiel ist ganz einfach: Wähle eine Plättchen-Chip-Kombination und lege sie ab. Vier davon stehen immer zur Verfügung und werden nach einem Zug sofort wieder aufgefüllt. Doch so einfach es auch scheint, man muss sich seine Entscheidungen gut überlegen. Denn manchmal sucht man ein bestimmtes Tier, aber es liegt nicht auf dem richtigen Landplättchen, oder umgekehrt. Und im Spiel, konzentrieren Sie sich darauf, die größten Flächen zu bilden, oder wollen Sie, dass Ihre Tiere optimal punkten? Und auf welches Tier setzen Sie hauptsächlich? Schließlich können Sie nicht alles auf einmal machen. Manche Kombinationen sind in der Tat schwierig zu machen. Wie umgibt man einen Fuchs mit möglichst vielen Tieren, wenn man auch eine Reihe Rehe, eine Kombination aus Bären und ein Pendel aus Lachsen machen will? Es muss einfach funktionieren. Gleichzeitig muss man auch ein Auge darauf haben, was der Nachbar macht. Wenn er Rehe schießt, könnte es sich lohnen, sie ihm wegzuschnappen, und wenn Sie sehen, dass Ihr Gegner bestimmte Lebensräume vernachlässigt, können Sie diese auswählen, um am Ende Boni für Ihr größtes Gebiet zu erhalten.

Jetzt höre ich schon die ersten Kritiker in der Ferne rufen: "Man muss einfach Glück haben mit dem, was da sein wird. Der Glücksfaktor ist zu groß!" Das ist nicht ganz richtig. Tatsächlich ist auf einem Großteil der Plättchen neben einem Tier auch ein Tannenzapfen abgebildet. Wenn Sie ein Tierplättchen auf ein Plättchen mit einem Tannenzapfen gelegt haben, erhalten Sie sofort ein Naturplättchen. Diese Plättchen sind am Ende des Spiels einen Punkt wert, aber im Spiel selbst sind sie noch wertvoller. Wenn du ein solches Naturplättchen abgibst, kannst du eine beliebige der vier Kombinationen wählen, du musst dich also nicht an die vorgegebene Kombination halten. Du kannst nehmen, was du willst. Wenn Sie drei gleiche Tierplättchen ablegen, können Sie sie außerdem kostenlos durch neue Plättchen ersetzen, was Ihnen mehr Möglichkeiten bietet. Hier müssen Sie keine Naturplättchen bezahlen.

Am Ende des Spiels werden die Tiere nach den gewählten Tierkarten, den verschiedenen Lebensräumen, den Boni für die größten Lebensräume und den verbleibenden Naturplättchen gewertet. Der Spieler mit den meisten Punkten gewinnt.

Cascadia punktet nicht umsonst in der Kategorie Familienspiele. Der scheinbar sehr einfache Mechanismus eignet sich schon für kleine Kinder. Das Auslegen und Kombinieren ist an sich einfach und leicht zu bewerkstelligen. Gleichzeitig bieten die verschiedenen Wertungsmechanismen Herausforderungen für fortgeschrittene Spieler. Wie kombiniert man Lebensräume und Tiere optimal? Wie platziert man seine Plättchen, um den höchsten Ertrag zu erzielen? Und welche Strategie wählen Sie, um Ihren Gegner zu überlisten? Du kannst auch den Schwierigkeitsgrad anpassen, indem du verschiedene Wertungskarten wählst und Kombinationen bildest, die das Spiel erschweren, z. B. indem sich die Tiere gegenseitig in die Quere kommen. Du kannst auch einen der Erfolge und Szenarien aus dem Handbuch auswählen. Sie spielen dann nicht nur das Spiel, sondern erfüllen auch bestimmte Ziele. Dadurch wird das Spiel mehr zu einem Wettbewerb und einem Spiel gegeneinander. Das ist super für diejenigen, die Spiele hassen, bei denen man hauptsächlich mit seinem eigenen Brett spielt und nicht gemeinsam auf einem! Plötzlich ködert man die gleichen Kombinationen mit den Zielen und es wird viel spannender. Gleichzeitig kannst du dir auch selbst Regeln auferlegen, um das Spiel spannender und schwieriger zu machen. Denken Sie zum Beispiel daran, dass bestimmte Lebensräume und Tiere nicht aneinander grenzen dürfen.

Du siehst, die Möglichkeiten und Entscheidungen sind endlos. Und das ist auch der Grund, warum ich es für ein so geniales Spiel halte. Jeder Spielliebhaber kann es nach seinem eigenen Geschmack und Niveau anpassen. Wer denkt, dass es sich um ein einfaches Spiel handelt, bei dem man einfach nur Steine wie Dominosteine zusammensetzt, der täuscht sich. Es steckt viel Tiefe und Abwechslung dahinter, von der ich jetzt schon weiß, dass sie mir endloses Spielvergnügen bereiten wird.

Das bringt mich auch zu dem Punkt, an dem ich mich darüber aufrege. Meine Familie war genau so begeistert wie ich. Nur meine Schwester, die lief während des Spiels ein bisschen grummelnd herum. "Ich versteh das nicht, eigentlich ganz schön schwierig, man muss auf so viel auf einmal achten". Es überrascht nicht, dass sie deutlich gewonnen hat. Darüber bin ich jetzt nicht sauer. Aber über die Worte, die auf ihren Sieg folgten: "Ja, jetzt habe ich es verstanden, eigentlich ist es nur Kingdomino mit Sechsecken". Da hat mich eine Art stellvertretende Wut gepackt. So kann man dieses Spiel wirklich nicht darstellen. Das ist Fluchen in der Spielekirche. Damit wird dieses Spiel in jeder Hinsicht unter Wert verkauft!

Fairerweise muss ich sagen, dass ich das Spiel verstehe: Man legt verschiedene Bereiche an und sammelt Symbole in den Bereichen, um die Bereiche wertvoller zu machen, und man muss aus vordefinierten Plättchen wählen. Aber, liebe Leute, da hört der Vergleich wirklich auf. Versteht mich nicht falsch, ich kann auch eine schnelle Partie Kingdomino zwischendurch genießen, nichts gegen dieses Spiel, aber Cascadia hat viel mehr Klasse, Features und, das sei auch erwähnt, ein schönes Design. Es ist wirklich ein Fest und eine Freude für die Augen, wenn sich vor Ihren Augen ein immer größer werdendes Gebiet der Natur auf dem Tisch ausbreitet. Der Stil, die Verwendung von Farben, die Bilder der Tiere: alles ist gleichermaßen überwältigend. Damit ist Herrn Flynn wirklich ein Traumdebüt gelungen, wenn Sie mich fragen.

Ich bin ein Fan!

Ein großer Fan!

Bewertung für Bordspelwereld durch: Anouk Wognum (Mungow),

Zuvor gepostet auf: 22-09-2023, mit einer Bewertung von: 8/10 Sterne

Link zu dieser Bewertung: https://www.bordspelwereld.nl/de/bewertungen/neueste-bewertu...

Diese deutsche Übersetzung wurde aus dem Niederländischen von DeepL erstellt. Wir denken, dass sie nicht 100% perfekt ist. Wenn Sie etwas verbessern können, lassen Sie es uns bitte wissen. Vielen Dank dafür!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia, by Bordspelwereld [EN]

The fact that I didn't have time to write anything earlier this week has made me feel exhausted all week. Last weekend I did Cascadia with my family.

The second time for me, the first for them. Read: I played the game, fell in love, bought it, and spent family weekend attempting to indoctrinate my family with the tile-placement virus. We'll get to why I've been eating myself up since that weekend. But first let's start at the beginning.

Cascadia is not a new game. White Goblin Games published it in 2022 and it immediately won the prize in the Family category at the Dutch games prize. I will soon explain why this is completely justified in my opinion. Cascadia is a game by Randy Flynn. I had to put the best man through the Google machine, and as far as I can see Cascadia is his debut. The real experts can correct me. It bodes well for the future if this is your entry into the gaming world.

In Cascadia you can score points by cleverly placing hexagon tiles together and thus score with combinations of both animals and the animals' habitats. Each turn you can choose from a combination of a tile (depicting different habitats and one or more animals) and an animal token. You place the animal tokens on tiles depicting this animal. The animal may only lie on this surface. This can be done on the tile just placed or on a previously placed tile on which the animal is depicted.

Because you start with a starting tile consisting of three consecutive tiles, you always have four tiles during the game on which you can possibly place an animal token. So you can only choose a combination of a tile and an animal token if you have a free tile containing the animal from the chosen combination. You have to be able to get rid of the animal. Only one animal token is placed on each tile, even if there are more animals depicted on the tile. You score points with the combination of animal tokens and by the size of different types of areas you form with your tiles. You also get bonus points for each type of area if you appear to have the largest area during the final count. How much this is depends on the number of players.

The different habitats are wetlands, rivers, mountains, prairies and forests. There are no placement rules for these areas. Any area can compete against any area, but that is of course not smart if you want to score points, because at the final count you only score from each area type, your largest area. You then score one point per tile that makes up the area.

The scoring of the animal tokens is a bit more ingenious and quite brilliant if you ask me. There are five types of animals in the game: The grizzly bear, the Roosevelt-Wapiti (or: a deer), the Chinook salmon, the Red-tailed Hawk and the Red Fox. How these animals score depends on the scoring cards you draw prior to the game. There are four different scoring cards for each animal. Which means there are 20 different scoring scenarios/combinations. The scoring cards have different scoring mechanisms and there is still variation in that.

In my first two games we played the scenarios recommended in the rules, which is the starting point of this review, but certainly not the only correct or existing combination, see it as an example. The grizzly bear scores points by placing two grizzly bears next to each other. A third or fourth bear makes the combination worthless. The more of these combinations, the more they become worth.

You score the deer by placing them next to each other in straight lines. The longer the row, the more points. You can have multiple rows in the final count, but each deer can only count in one row. Make as long a stream as possible for the Chinook salmon, this does not have to be a straight line, but they must be adjacent to each other. There should never be 3 salmon adjacent to each other, so you cannot make a sharp turn. The longer your stream of salmon, the more points you get, and that can really add up! The buzzard is not the most difficult. It simply cannot be adjacent to another buzzard. The more buzzards, the more they become worth per piece. You score a maximum of 6 points for the fox. A point for each different animal species you surround him with. The fox itself also counts.

The game flow is quite simple: choose a tile/chip combination and place it. Four of these are always ready and they are immediately replenished after a service. However, as simple as it seems, you should think carefully about your choices. Because sometimes you are looking for a specific animal, but it is not located on the right land tile, or the other way around. And do you focus in the game on forming the largest areas, or do you want your animals to score optimally? And which animal do you mainly focus on? It cannot all be done at the same time. Some combinations are difficult to make. Because how do you surround a fox with as many animals as possible if you also want to make a row of the deer, a combination of the bear and a garland of the salmon? That should just work. At the same time, you also keep an eye on what your neighbor is doing. If he is scoring deer, it can be worth grabbing them from under his nose, and when you see that your opponent is ignoring certain habitats, you can choose those to score bonuses for your biggest ones at the end. area.

Now in the distance I can already hear the first critics shouting: “You just have to be lucky with what comes next. The happiness factor is too great!” That's not quite right. A large number of the tiles also depict a pine cone in addition to an animal. When you place an animal token on a tile with a pine cone, you immediately receive a nature token. These chips are worth one point at the end of the game, but are even more valuable in the game itself. Upon surrendering such a nature token, you can choose randomly from the four combinations and therefore do not have to stick to the combinations as they are ready. You can just take what you want. Also, when three of the same animal tokens have been prepared, you can replace the animal tokens for free with new tokens and therefore more options. Here you do not have to pay a nature token.

At the end of the game you score the animals according to the chosen animal cards, the different habitats, the bonuses for the largest habitats and the remaining nature tokens. The player with the most points wins.

It is not without reason that Cascadia scores in the family games category. The apparently very simple mechanism is suitable from a young age. Installing and combining is simple and easy to do. At the same time, the different scoring mechanisms provide a challenge for advanced players. How do you optimally combine habitats and animals? How do you place your tiles for the highest return? And what strategy do you choose to outsmart your opponent? You can also adjust the difficulty level by choosing different scoring cards and by making combinations that make the game more difficult because, for example, animals get in each other's way. You can also choose to choose one of the achievements and scenarios from the manual. You are not just playing the game, you are also achieving certain targets and goals. This makes it more of a competition and game against each other. This is great for people who hate games where you mainly focus on your own board and not together on one! Suddenly you are targeting the same combinations with the targets and it becomes a lot more exciting. At the same time, you can also impose rules restrictions on yourself to make it more exciting and difficult. Consider, for example, that certain habitats and animals may not be adjacent to each other.

You see, the possibilities and choices are endless. And that is also why I think it is such a brilliant game. Every game lover can tailor it to his or her own preference and level. Anyone who thinks that this is just a simple game, where you just put pieces together like dominoes, will be disappointed. There is a lot of depth and variety behind it, which I already know will give me endless fun.

This also brings me to the point that I'm worried about. My family was just as excited as I was. Only my sister who grumbled a bit during the game. “I don't get it, it's actually quite difficult, you have to pay attention to so much at the same time.” It won't surprise you: Mrs. won big. Well, that's not what I'm sour about. But about the words that followed her win: “Yes, now I realize it, it's actually just Kingdomino with hexagons.” A kind of vicarious anger took possession of me. Depicting this game in such a way is really not possible. It's swearing in the church of games. It sells this game short on all fronts!

To be honest, I understand the similarity: you create different areas and collect symbols in areas to make areas more valuable and you have to choose from pre-selected tiles. But really lovely people, that's where the comparison really ends. Don't get me wrong, I can also enjoy a quick game of Kingdomino in between, nothing to the detriment of that game, but Cascadia has much more class, options and let's also mention it: a beautiful design. It is truly a party and a pleasure for your eyes when an ever-expanding nature reserve fills the table in front of you. The style, the use of color, the images of the animals: it is all equally beautiful. This really makes Mr. Flynn a dream debut if you ask me.

I am a fan! Big fan!

Review for Bordspelwereld by: Anouk Wognum (Mungow),

Published on 22-09-2023, with a rating of 8/10 stars

Link to review: https://www.bordspelwereld.nl/en/en-reviews/cascadia

You don't have to put down one game in order to put up another. Have you tried Kingdomino with a 7x7 grid? It's just like Cascadia with squares. Seriously, I see a lot of similarities, in a good way.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia: een gedroomd debuut!, door Bordspelwereld [NL]

Het feit dat ik niet eerder de tijd had deze week om iets te schrijven, maakt dat ik me de hele week al loop op te vreten. Afgelopen weekend deed ik Cascadia met mijn familie.

Voor mij de tweede keer, voor hen de eerste. Lees: Ik speelde het spel, werd verliefd, kocht het, en deed tijdens het familieweekend een poging om mijn familie te indoctrineren met het tile-placement-virus. We komen er zo op waarom ik me sinds dat weekend op loop te vreten. Maar eerst beginnen bij het begin.

Cascadia is geen nieuw spel. White Goblin games gaf het in 2022 al uit en het won meteen de prijs in de categorie Familie bij de Nederlandse spellenprijs. Ik zal straks uit den doeken doen waarom dit geheel terecht is naar mijn mening. Cascadia is een spel van Randy Flynn. Ik moest de beste man even door de google machine halen, en zover ik kan zien is Cascadia zijn debuut. De echt kenners mogen me corrigeren. Het belooft veel goeds voor de toekomst wanneer dit je binnenkomer in spellenwereld is.

In Cascadia kan je punten scoren door hexagon-tegels op een slimme manier aan elkaar te plaatsen en zo te scoren met combinaties van zowel dieren als de leefgebieden van de dieren. Elke beurt heb je de keuze uit een combinatie van een tegel (met daarop zowel verschillende leefgebieden als één of meerdere dieren afgebeeld) en een dierenfiche. De dierenfiches plaats je op tegels waarop dit dier afgebeeld staat. Enkel alleen daarop mag het dier liggen. Dit kan zowel op de zojuist aangelegde tegel als op een eerder gelegde tegel waarop het dier is afgebeeld.

Doordat je begint met een starttegel bestaande uit drie aaneengesloten tegels heb je gedurende het spel dus altijd vier tegels waarop je een dierenfiche mogelijk kwijt kan. Je kunt dus alleen een combinatie van een tegel en dierenfiche kiezen als je een vrije tegel hebt waar het dier uit de gekozen combinatie op staat. Je moet het dier kwijt kunnen. Op elke tegel komt maar één dierenfiche te liggen, ook wanneer er wel meer dieren op de tegel afgebeeld staan. Je scoort punten met de combinatie van dierenfiches en door de grootte van verschillende soorten gebieden die je vormt met je tegels. Per soort gebied krijg je ook nog bonuspunten als je bij de eindtelling het grootste gebied blijkt te hebben. Hoeveel dit is hangt af van het aantal spelers.

De verschillende leefgebieden zijn draslanden, rivieren, bergen, prairies en bossen. Er zijn geen plaatsingsregels voor deze gebieden. Elk gebied mag tegen elk gebied, maar dat is natuurlijk niet slim als je punten wilt scoren, want bij de eindtelling score je enkel van elke gebiedssoort, je grootste gebied. Je scoort dan een punt per tegel, waar het gebied uit bestaat.

De scoring van de dierenfiches zit wat vernuftiger in elkaar en is tamelijk briljant als je het mij vraagt. In het spel zijn er een vijftal soorten dieren: De grizzlybeer, de Roosevelt-Wapiti (oftewel: een hert), de Chinookzalm, De Roodstaartbuizerd en de Rode Vos. Hoe deze dieren scoren hangt af van de scoringskaarten die je voorafgaand aan het spel trekt. Voor elk dier zijn er vier verschillende scoringskaarten aanwezig. Waardoor er 20 verschillende scoringsscenario’s/combinaties zijn. De scoringkaarten hebben verschillende scoringsmechanismes en ook daarin zit dus nog variatie.

In mijn eerste twee spellen hebben we de in de spelregels aangeraden scenario’s gespeeld, dat is het uitgangspunt van deze review, maar dus zeker niet de enige juiste of bestaande combi, zie het als voorbeeld. De grizzly beer scoort punten door steeds twee grizzly beren naast elkaar te plaatsen. Een derde of vierde beer maakt de combinatie waardeloos. Hoe meer van deze combinaties, hoe meer ze waard worden.

De herten scoor je door ze in rechte lijnen naast elkaar te plaatsen. Hoe langer de rij, hoe meer punten. Je kan bij de eindtelling meerdere rijen hebben, maar elk hert mag maar meetellen in één rij. Van de Chinook-zalm maak je een zo lang mogelijke slinger, dit hoeft geen rechte lijn te zijn, maar ze moeten wel aan elkaar grenzen. Er mogen nooit 3 zalmen aan elkaar grenzen, dus je kan geen scherpe bocht maken. Hoe langer je slinger zalmen, hoe meer punten, en dat kan aardig oplopen! De buizerd is de moeilijkste niet. Die mag gewoon simpelweg niet aan een andere buizerd grenzen. Hoe meer buizerds, hoe meer ze per stuk waard worden. Voor de vos scoor je maximaal 6 punten. Voor elk verschillende diersoort waarmee je hem omringt een punt. De vos zelf telt ook mee.

Het spel verloop is vrij simpel: tegel/fiche combinatie kiezen en aanleggen. Hiervan liggen er steeds vier klaar en deze worden na een beurt direct bijgevuld. Echter, zo simpel als het lijkt, zo goed moet je nadenken over je keuzes. Want soms zoek je een bepaald dier, maar ligt deze niet bij de juiste landtegel, of precies andersom. En focus je in het spel op het vormen van de grootste gebieden, of wil je je dieren optimaal laten scoren? En op welk dier zet je dan voornamelijk in? Het kan namelijk niet allemaal tegelijk. Sommige combinaties zijn namelijk lastig te leggen. Want hoe omring je een vos met zoveel mogelijk dieren, als je van het hert ook nog een rij wil maken, van de beer een combinatie en van de zalm een slinger? Dat moet maar net lukken. Tegelijkertijd houd je ook in de gaten wat je buurman aan het doen is. Als die aan het scoren is op herten, kan het lonen die voor zijn neus weg te grissen, en wanneer je ziet dat je tegenstander bepaalde leefgebieden links laat liggen, kun jij juist die gaan kiezen om aan het einde bonussen te gaan scoren voor je grootste gebied.

Nou hoor ik in de verte de eerste critici al roepen: “je moet maar net geluk hebben met wat er komt te liggen. De geluksfactor is te groot!” Dat klopt niet helemaal. Op een groot deel van de tegels staat namelijk naast een dier ook nog een dennenappel afgebeeld. Wanneer je een dierenfiche hebt geplaatst op een tegel met een dennenappel, krijg je direct een natuurfiche. Deze fiches zijn aan het einde van het spel een punt waard, maar zijn in het spel zelf nog veel waardevoller. Tegen inlevering van zo’n natuurfiche, mag je namelijk uit de vier combinaties willekeurig kiezen en hoef je je dus niet te houden aan de combinaties zoals deze klaar liggen. Je mag gewoon pakken wat je hebben wilt. Ook mag je wanneer er drie dezelfde dierenfiches zijn klaar gelegd de dierenfiches gratis vervangen voor nieuwe fiches en dus meer keuzemogelijkheden. Hier hoef je geen natuurfiche te betalen.

Aan het einde van de spel scoor je de dieren volgens de gekozen dierenkaarten, de verschillende leefgebieden, de bonussen voor de grootste leefgebieden en de overgebleven natuurfiches. De speler met de meeste punten wint.

Cascadia scoort niet voor niets in de categorie familiespellen. Het op het oog zeer simpele mechanisme is geschikt vanaf jonge leeftijden. Het aanleggen en combineren is op zich simpel en goed te doen. Tegelijkertijd bieden de verschillende scoringsmechanismes uitdaging voor de gevorderde spelers. Hoe combineer je leefgebieden en dieren optimaal? Hoe plaats je je tegels voor het hoogste rendement? En welke strategie kies je om je tegenstander te slim af te zijn? Ook kun je de moeilijkheidsgraad aan passen door voor andere scoringskaarten te kiezen en door daarin combinaties te maken die het spel moeilijker maken doordat dieren elkaar bijvoorbeeld in de weg gaan zitten. Je kunt er ook voor kiezen om een van de prestaties en scenario’s uit de handleiding te kiezen. Je speelt dan niet gewoon het spel, je bent dan ook nog bepaalde targets en doelen aan het halen. Hierdoor wordt het meer een wedstrijd en spel tegen elkaar. Dit is top voor de mensen die een hekel hebben aan spellen waarbij je voornamelijk met je eigen bordje bezig bent en niet samen op één! Ineens aas je met de doelen op dezelfde combinaties en wordt het een stuk spannender. Tegelijkertijd kun je jezelf ook nog regelbeperkingen opleggen om het spannender en moeilijker te maken. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan het niet aan elkaar mogen grenzen van bepaalde leefgebieden en dieren.

Je ziet, de mogelijkheden en keuzes zijn eindeloos. En dat maakt ook waarom ik het zo’n briljant spel vind. Iedere spelliefhebber kan het naar zijn eigen hand en niveau zetten. Wie denkt dat dit even een simpel spelletjes is, waar je als domino gewoon stukjes aan elkaar legt, komt bedrogen uit. Er zit heel veel diepgang én variatie achter, waarvan ik nu al weet dat het me eindeloos speelplezier gaat bezorgen.

Dit brengt me ook meteen op het punt waar ik me over op loop te vreten. Mijn familie was net zo enthousiast als ik. Enkel mijn zus die liep wat te mopperen tijdens het spel. “Ik snap het niet, eigenlijk best wel moeilijk, je moet op zoveel tegelijk letten”. Het zal je niet verbazen: mevrouw won dik. Nou is dat niet waar ik zuur over ben. Maar wel over de woorden die volgde op haar winst: “Ja, nu heb ik ‘m wel door, eigenlijk is het gewoon Kingdomino met hexagons”. Een soort plaatsvervangende woede maakte zich meester van mij. Dit spel op dergelijke manier afschilderen kan echt niet. Het is vloeken in de spelletjeskerk. Het doet dit spel op alle fronten te kort!

Eerlijkheid gebied me te zeggen: ik snap de overeenkomst: je creëert verschillende gebieden en verzamelt symbooltjes in gebieden, om gebieden meer waard te laten zijn en je moet uit voorgeselecteerde tegels kiezen. Maar echt lieve mensen, daar houdt de vergelijking echt wel op. Begrijp me niet verkeerd, ik kan ook genieten van een snel potje Kingdomino tussendoor, niets ten nadele van dat spel, maar Cascadia heeft veel meer klasse, mogelijkheden en laten we die ook nog even noemen: een prachtige vormgeving. Het is werkelijk waar een feestje en genot voor je oog als voor je neus een steeds groter natuurgebied de tafel vult. De stijl, het kleurgebruik, de afbeeldingen van de dieren: het is allemaal even prachtig. Hiermee heeft meneer Flynn toch echt wel een droom debuut te pakken als je het mij vraagt.

Ik ben fan! Groot fan!

Review voor Bordspelwereld door: Anouk Wognum (Mungow),

Eerder geplaatst op: 22-09-2023, met een waardering van: 8/10 sterren

Link naar review: https://www.bordspelwereld.nl/nl/reviews-nl/nieuwste-reviews...

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia - Very quick review

A highly enjoyable game of arranging animal and terrain tiles, with endless replay value. Players have a wealth of options and opportunities in this rich and colorful nature-themed game. It works well with children but also provides a satisfying experience for older players. The game offers excellent variety in tiles and choices. The player with the highest skill level frequently comes out as the winner, but each player always seems to have good chances. However, even for a competitive player, the loss doesn't cause frustration, as the tile-laying gameplay is so enjoyable and relaxing. At times, it may feel like options are limited, but that is often due to a poor strategy or a restricted perspective. The game is very easy to teach, and new players often quickly grasp what makes the game appealing: beautiful components and exciting possibilities. The game stands the test of time, offering many years of gameplay. Particularly effective as a filler game, it earns an 8.5/10.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia - Tile placement goodness

Cascadia by @alderaceg. This game sounds very easy: pick a tile, place it anywhere in you landscape and place the animal in a corresponding habitat. There are almost no rules for the tile placement, the only thing you can't do is place them on top of each other or move them after placement. Sounds easy, right?

Well, it's not because not only do you have to look at the cards that give you end of game scoring, you also want to make large habitats, as they score in two ways. They score based on the number of tiles (only score your biggest group), but the player who has the largest habitat of one type, earns extra bonus points. The cards will score based on the animals and their placings. For example, the fox wants to be surrounded by different types of animals, the bears want to be a couple and no other bears should be in the spaces around. The birds want to fly solo (), and the salmons want to make a continuous line. However, these are just the starting cards, and the game comes with many cards, so there is a lot of replayability!!

This is a great family game, a game for cosy days, introduction game.. Basically: this game is great!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Our Cascadia Review (Portuguese version)

Quem gosta de animais e dos seus ecossistemas, tem aqui o jogo perfeito.

Porque em Cascadia criamos o ecossistema certo para cada animal, sejam eles ursos, raposas, águias, veados ou salmões.

É um jogo com uma dinâmica muito engraçada, fácil de aprender, mas que permite (ou obriga ) a muita concentração e poder de antecipação. Afinal o truque está em apostar nos ecossistemas mais favoráveis à combinação de cartas de jogo aleatoriamente escolhidas em cada partida. Estas cartas (existem 4 diferentes para cada animal) determinam a forma de pontuar de cada animal e são elas que fazem com que cada partida seja diferente e um novo desafio.

Esteticamente é um jogo simples, mas bem conseguido. As cartas são auto explicativas, os animais têm cores distintas e os ecossistemas com desenhos alusivos, criam uma mesa de jogo colorida e apelativa.

Cascadia tem também a grande vantagem de não cansar. Já jogámos inúmeras partidas e continuamos com vontade de jogar mais.

No que toca à pontuação, embora não seja difícil de apurar, é mais morosa, o que poderá desmotivar algumas pessoas. No entanto, na nossa opinião, aqueles minutos extra, valem muito a pena. Até porque os resultados são, em regra, renhidos, o que mantém todos em suspenso até à ultima soma!

Falta apenas dizer que Cascadia também tem uma óptima jogabilidade para dois jogadores.

===RESEÑA===

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Falta apenas dizer que Cascadia também tem uma óptima jogabilidade para dois jogadores e a nossa classificação geral é de 4 dados.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia Review

Overview

Cascadia is a puzzly tile-laying and token-drafting game featuring the habitats and wildlife of the Pacific Northwest.

Gameplay

You start with three hexagonal habitat tiles, and on your turn you choose a new tile that's paired with a wildlife token out of the four pairs available.

You place that tile next to your other ones and put the wildlife token on a tile with a matching symbol to the token. Each animal has a different scoring objective so where you place the tokens really matters.

A new random tile and token are drawn and the next player picks their pair. If there are ever 3 or 4 of the same token you can pick new ones at random. Or if you have a nature token you can choose any pair or refresh the tokens.

Once each player has placed 20 tiles the game ends! As well as the animal scoring objectives you get points for the size of each of your largest terrain types.

Overall Thoughts

Positive: we love the simple gameplay and all the puzzly decisions you have to make. Do you focus on the animal objectives and tokens or the placement of the tiles and the terrains. Or try and do some of everything. The changing objectives and randomness creates a lot of variability. And of course we love the beautiful artwork throughout the game.

Negative: apart from what players pick from the tiles and tokens, there’s not much player interaction. You’re mainly focused on your own little area.

Hi,

(Edit: Silly me, maybe "player interaction" means mechanical player interaction. As it's a tableau building game it didn't occur to me to think of this. Apologies if I misunderstood.)

Anyway are you really not looking at your fellow players tableaus to see where one needs to attack or defend habitat points while keeping an eye on the likely wildlife tokens left in the bag to asses risk when taking on new points projects later in the game?

Sure, you might not be drawing attention to other players when they are at risk but why deny complements for interesting habitat shapes or leading in objective scoring.

This game is so smooth even time taken mulling over the draft is welcome for interpersonal interaction of this nature.

The only adaption required is that one really needs to gently rattle the bag at players who fail to refresh the draft before placing their choices in order to keep the turns flowing.

Cheers and good gaming.

Hello! Yes we were referring to there being not very much mechincal player interaction. That's alright! It probably comes down to play style as well, we are often so wrapped up in our out area that we either forget or don't have the mental capacity to factor in what our opponent's are doing. Thank you for your thoughts! Happy gaming

Anyway are you really not looking at your fellow players tableaus to see where one needs to attack or defend habitat points while keeping an eye on the likely wildlife tokens left in the bag to asses risk when taking on new points projects later in the game?

This sounds like work instead of fun for me. It would double the playing time of our games.

I suppose we all enjoy different things from games, even from the same games. Another reason why it's such a great hobby!

===RESEÑA===

Título: A Breath of Fresh Pacific Northwest Air

Well said

===RESEÑA===

Título: Review - Cascadia (Mr. & Ms. Meeple)

Hi all,

Be sure to check out our review of Cascadia below and let us know what you think. We want to hear your opinions and experiences with the game . You can also find this review via Instagram: Mr. & Ms. Meeple - Review Cascadia.

Cascadia

: Alderac Entertainment Group (AEG)

: Randy Flynn

: Beth Sobel

: 1-4

: 10+

: 30-45’

: Open Drafting, Pattern Building & Tile Placement

In Cascadia, players take turns in creating an environment situated in the Pacific Northwest by drafting Habitat Tiles and Wildlife Tokens. During his turn, a player places one of the 4 available tile and token combinations in his environment. The just drafted token can be placed on any tile as long as it matches one of the wildlife symbols on that tile. You don’t have to match the habitats on the tiles, but if you do you’ll score more points in the end. Before the next player’s turn, the supply is replenished. The game continues until each player has taken 20 turns, after which the player with the most points wins.

Each of the 5 species has to be placed in a certain pattern to be able to score points. These patterns are randomly selected for each species at the start of the game. For example, you score points for a stream of salmon or for a group of 3 bears. You also score points for the largest group of each habitat type in your environment and for having the largest group of a habitat type among players.

We played Cascadia for the first time at our local gaming club with some friends and was an instant hit for all 4 of us. This alone should tell you that Cascadia is a phenomenal game. It’s fun to build your own environment, while trying to form groups of each habitat type and creating wildlife patterns. Creating those patterns is what makes this game stand out for us. You have to think about which tile and token combination you're choosing, because one more token of a certain species can make a real difference in the amount of points you’ll score.

We also like the Nature Tokens, which you can use to swap 2 Wildlife Tokens or replace a number of Wildlife Tokens on the Habitat Tiles in the supply. Playing a Nature Token at the right time can really help your game or mess up an opponent’s. It adds an extra layer of strategy we really appreciate. Cascadia is a game that feels different every time because of the randomly determined patterns and order of available tiles and tokens. We wouldn’t mind some more wildlife patterns to further increase variability. In short, a recommendation from us.

Greetings,

Mr. & Ms. Meeple

Wesley & Elke

Instagram - Mr. & Ms. Meeple

We also like the Nature Tokens, which you can use to swap 2 Wildlife Tokens

You do not actually swap tokens. You pick a token and a tile. The others stay where they were.

On your turn, before you select a tile

and token, you may spend a Nature

Token to do one of the following:

1. Take ANY one of the four Habitat

Tiles and ANY one of the four Wildlife

Tokens.

tom tom

@1qwerty

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and token, you may spend a Nature

Token to do one of the following:

1. Take ANY one of the four Habitat

Tiles and ANY one of the four Wildlife

Tokens.

You’re right. It isn’t really the same as swapping . I thought it was the best way to phrase this mechanism so people could form an idea and stay below the character limit on Instagram .

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia – a solo review – by Stidjen Plays Solo

Oh, nature; you never cease to amaze us. The landscape changes around you – all of a sudden, a hexagonal habitat drops out of the clear sky, sometimes immediately populated by various types of wildlife. Nature works in mysterious ways – except in Cascadia, where you get to play the maker!

Name: Cascadia (2022)

Designer: Randy Flynn

Publisher: Flatout Games, Alderac Entertainment Group, White Goblin Games

Play type: set collection, tile laying, pattern building, open drafting

What the game is about

Can you create a habitable environment for different kinds of wildlife? In Cascadia, you will be drafting habitat tiles and animals, and placing them according to varying rules, all for different end-game scoring conditions.

How the game works

The solo game of Cascadia is set up precisely as the two-player game. You set aside a number of tiles, twenty per player plus an additional three, and randomly draw four of them face-up, accompanying each one with an animal token drawn from the bag. You also get a starting tile consisting of three hexes with all land types present. The habitats are grassland, water, mountain, forest, and desert; the animals are salmon, elk, bear, fox, and hawk.

During your turn, you draft one of the four habitat/animal combinations and add them to your tableau. Habitats can be placed adjacent to any other tile; animals can only be placed on a tile if their symbol is present on the tile. Some tiles have multiple eligible animals, but only one token can inhabit them. Some tiles only have one animal on them, but these give you a nature token when you place said animal there. You don’t have to place the token on the tile you just drafted, but you have to place them immediately. If you can’t, you have to forfeit that particular tile or token.

Nature tokens are worth 1 VP each at the end of the game, but you can also spend one to either a) refresh the animals in the market or b) break the rule that you can only pick the habitat and animal that are together in the market. You can also refresh the market if there are at least three identical animal tokens there, but this doesn’t cost a nature token.

When you have drafted a set and placed the tile and token in your tableau, the right-most tile and token in the market are discarded, somewhat simulating another player. After that, it is refilled and you get to pick again. The game ends when you have drafted 20 times – due to how many tiles you set apart at the start of the game, this moment happens when you can no longer choose from four tiles. You tally up your score for habitats (largest cluster of each type, plus two bonus points if at least seven tiles big) and animals (depending on which of the four variants you pick), and there’s your final score.

While the game is technically a beat-your-own-score, the rules booklet comes with some added challenges in the back. They present you with a specific setup and the accompanying score threshold you need to beat in order to call a game a win. The fun thing is that you can play these challenge setups in multiplayer as well!

Theme, setting & narrative

Gorgeous, lush – those two words alone should give you a pretty good idea of what you can expect when you first open this box. The tiles are nice and thick, the wooden animal tokens nice to the touch, and they come in a lovely cloth bag to store them in and draw them from, no less. While I don’t particularly like the artwork on the tiles, they are but a minor part of the overall art experience. Most of a tile gets covered by a token anyway, and the animal cards – much more prevalent – are nicer to look at. Other than that, I have no quibbles.

How does it play?

Games like this – the ones where you have but a few decisions to make each turn, although they start branching off as the game progresses – need a strong incentive to keep their players engaged. Or me, at least. I think Cascadia succeeds in offering a low enough barrier to entry to reel people in, and enough interesting decisions to keep you there.

Mind you – Cascadia is not, and will never be, a heavy game by any stretch of the imagination. But what it does, it does right. If I have to sum it up in a few words, I’d say it offers you a somewhat strategical onset with a smattering of tactical choices and a hint of push-your-luck. Let me elaborate.

Cascadia is strategic because you know how animals and habitats score. There is no hidden scoring information; the only uncertainty is which animals and tiles come out and in what order. It is that uncertainty that makes Cascadia a tactical experience with some no-brainer decisions, but also a cavalcade of tiny decisions that can make or break your score. There are enough viable scoring paths in this game that you need to apply focus lest you fall into the trap of wanting to do everything all at once. And finally, the game has a push-your-luck aspect in the sense that you cannot fully rely on probabilities to predict how easy it is to score with, say, hawks, or mountains.

While the animals are drawn from an evenly seeded bag, the tiles are taken from the box at the beginning of the game, so not all of them are in rotation. You could’ve randomly left a lot of tiles of a certain terrain in the box without knowing! This gives the game just enough uncertainty that you can’t really game it out from the start. All you have are probabilities to work with. To balance this out, animals have the more lucrative scoring conditions. Habitats only become interesting once they hit a size of seven, which is the threshold to receive two bonus points. The game manages to strike a good balance between short-term planning and long-term strategy; you really want to plan ahead, but you can’t put your head in the sand for opportunities either. Tiles and tokens won’t be around forever, so there is some pressure there, too.

It’s a minor nitpick, but the way the market flows – and how you can manipulate it – felt to me like I was gaming the system more than I was actually playing the game. It didn’t bug me too much, but it was the one thing that pierced Cascadia‘s relaxing veneer. It’s also the only opposition the game is gonna give you, so be aware of that before getting this game; if you want a game of blocking and getting your plans screwed up, this is not it. Besides the random tile and token draws, you play with near-perfect information.

I like the addition of nature tokens as an additional source of points, but more importantly, as a way to make sure you’re not forced to draft too many unwanted or useless tiles and tokens. There is even a smidge of push-your-luck detectable here; when you are refreshing the market, you never know what you are gonna get – you only can hope it won’t be the animals you just replaced (since they don’t get added to the bag until after you’ve refreshed the market).

Finally, the overall component quality is really good. It looks inviting, the tiles are nice and thick, and the animal tokens feel great and even come with their own draw bag. That, together with the fact this game works great at all player counts, and it fas a family mode too, makes this a valuable purchase even if you don’t have a specific person in mind to play this game with. You’ll never know who would like to play Cascadia once they locate its beautiful box cover on your shelf!

What you might like

a low enough barrier of entry, but enough interesting decisions to keep you engaged

a game that combines strategy with tactical decisions and a smidge of push-your-luck

tactical decisions with just enough uncertainty to prevent becoming a solvable puzzle

balancing between two scoring conditions – animals and habitats

What you might not like

managing the tiles and tokens in the market feels like ‘gaming the system’ sometimes

if you want more tension and gut-wrenching decision-making, then this game is not for you

Conclusion

Cascadia is racking up trophies left right and center, and rightly deserved. It combines a beautiful presentation with easy-to-learn mechanisms and enough interesting directions the game’s various scoring conditions try to pull you in. I like the way it tickles my brain when I play it, but at times I wonder if instead, I fancy more. Am I right in thinking that this game leaves me hungry afterward, or should I just take another bite?

Rating:

This review was first published on Stidjen Plays Solo. You can read the full review here.

Thank you for reading! My name is Stijn and I write about solo games under the name of Stidjen Plays Solo. For more reviews you can check out my blog, Facebook page, and a lot of board game pictures on my Instagram-account.

If you like my content, please consider buying me a coffee or supporting me on Patreon.

Thanks for the excellent and thoughtful review. If you remain hungry after Cascadia, try a bite of Verdant. It's similar, but with a bit more brain-tickling flavor.

Eric V

@EricTheFed

Thanks for the excellent and thoughtful review. If you remain hungry after Cascadia, try a bite of Verdant. It's similar, but with a bit more brain-tickling flavor.

That’s an astute observation – I have that one too, and played it once (1v1), but it seems to have a little more meat on the bone.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Laadukasta laatoitusta (a review in Finnish)

This review was first published on the Finnish bordgame site, Lautapeliopas, in November 2022. You can find the original post here. I'm planning on translating my review to English but until I've done that, please enjoy this gibberish that is known as the Finnish language!

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CASCADIA

Luo harmonisin ekosysteemi tässä Pohjois-Amerikan luoteisosan ja Kanadan rajamaiden eläimistöä ja ympäristöä esittelevässä pelissä. Luvassa on soljuvaa laattojen asettelua, joka sopii niin perheen kuin harrastajienkin peli-iltaan.

Cascadia-sanalla viitataan maantieteelliseen The Pacific Northwest-alueeseen, joka sijaitsee Pohjois-Amerikan luoteisosissa, Tyynenmeren rannikolla. Aivan tarkkoja rajauksia alueelle ei ole, mutta esimerkiksi yhtenä määritelmänä pidetään Kaskadivuoriston läntisiä merenranta-alueita. Ja sinne tämä Randy Flynnin suunnittelema ja Flatout Gamesin julkaisema peli sijoittuukin.

Cascadia on saavuttanut lyhyessä ajassa useita lautapelipalkintoja, joista viimeisimpänä on arvostettu Spiel des Jahres -palkinto tältä vuodelta. Ja aivan ansaitusti Cascadia on palkintonsa napannut, sillä kyllähän tätä Beth Sobelin kuvituksen kaunistamaa laattojen asettelua pelaa oikein mielellään.

Eläimiä elinympäristöihin

Cascadiassa siis kukin pelaaja rakentaa omaa maisemaansa elinympäristölaatoista ja eläinmerkeistä. Elinympäristölaattoihin on kuvattu viittä eri elinympäristöä (vuoristo, joki, metsä, kosteikko ja preeria) ja samaten eläinmerkeissä on viittä eri eläinlajia (kettu, karhu, lohi, peura ja haukka).

Alkuvalmistelut tekee ripeästi. Pelaajille jaetaan aloituslaatat, elinympäristölaattoja otetaan pelaajamäärän mukaisesti varantoon ja jokaiselle eläinlajille valitaan pisteytyskortti. Lopuksi neljä elinympäristölaattaa käännetään näkyviin ja niille nostetaan eläinmerkkipussista pariksi eläinmerkit. Sittenpä peli onkin jo valmis alkamaan.

Vuorollaan pelaaja valitsee yhden tarjolla olevista laatta-eläinmerkki -pareista ja asettaa sen omaan maisemaansa. Pelaaja voi asettaa laatan maisemaansa kuten haluaa, välittämättä samanlaisten elinympäristöjen jatkuvuudesta. Laatan asettamiseen kannattaa kuitenkin käyttää hetki aikaa, sillä pelin lopussa jokainen pelaaja saa pisteitä suurimmasta yhtenäisestä elinympäristöstään kussakin elinympäristötyypissä.

Elinympäristölaattoihin on kuvitettu lisäksi 1-3 eläintä, joita voi asettaa kyseiselle laatalle. Laatan asettamisen jälkeen pelaaja asettaa samalla vuorolla valitsemansa eläinmerkin sopivalle laatalle, jonka ei siis ole pakko olla sama laatta kuin minkä pelaaja valitsi kyseisellä kierroksella. On myös hyvä huomioida, että kullekin laatalle mahtuu vain yksi eläinmerkki. Sitenpä jos kierroksella valitulle eläinmerkille ei löydy sopivaa laattaa tai pelaaja ei halua käyttää sitä, eläinmerkki palautetaan pussiin. Eläinmerkeistäkin on tarjolla pisteitä, jos niitä saa asetettua omaan maisemaansa pelin alussa valittujen pisteytyskorttien mukaisesti, joten eläinmerkin asettaminen kannattaa myöskin pohtia huolella.

Kun pelaaja on asettanut laatan ja eläinmerkin maisemaansa, käännetään varannosta uusi laatta ja eläinmerkki valittujen tilalle ja seuraava pelaaja aloittaa vuoronsa. Pelaajamäärästä riippumatta jokaisella pelaajalla on aina pelissä 20 vuoroa aikaa rakentaa omaa maisemaansa ja kerryttää potentiaalista pistesaldoaan. Kun viimeinenkin pelaaja on pelannut 20. vuoronsa, peli päättyy, eläinkortit ja suurimmat yhtenäiset elinympäristöt pisteytetään ja eniten pisteitä kerännyt pelaaja voittaa pelin.

Vaihtelua vaihtoehdoilla

Cascadia on siis varsin suoraviivainen peli ja jokainen vuoro on käytännössä samansisältöinen: valitse laatta-eläinmerkki -pari ja aseta se maisemaasi. Vaihtelua peliin tuovat pelin alussa eläinlajeille valittavat pisteytyskortit. Kullekin eläimelle on neljä erilaista pisteytyskorttia, joista yksi valitaan summassa tai pelaajien yhteispäätöksellä kyseiselle pelikerralle. Pisteytyskortti sitten määrittelee, miten kyseisen lajin merkkejä kannattaa asettaa maisemaansa, jotta niistä saisi pisteitä. Ja koska pisteytyskortteja on joka eläinlajille tosiaan se neljä kappaletta, erilaisia pisteytyskombinaatioita on jo runsaasti tarjolla.

Cascadia ei ole myöskään täysin ryhmäpasianssia, vaan muiden pelaajien toimia kannattaa seurata pelin aikana. Suurimmista yhtenäisistä elinympäristöistä on jaossa lisäpisteitä niille pelaajille, joiden suurimmat elinympäristöt ovat isoimpia verrattuna muiden pelaajien elinympäristöihin kussakin elinympäristötyypissä. Tämä tuo peliin mukavasti pientä kilpailuasetelmaa.

Tuurin vaikutusta on pyritty tasoittamaan jonkin verran säännöissä. Jos pelaajan aloittaessa vuoroaan kaikki tarjolla olevat eläinmerkit ovat samaa lajia, ne vaihdetaan uusiin eläinmerkkeihin. Jos taas tarjolla olevista eläinmerkeistä kolme on samaa lajia, pelaaja voi halutessaan vaihdattaa kyseiset eläimet uusiin. Molemmissa tilanteissa tarjolla olleet eläinmerkit laitetaan syrjään ja pussista nostetaan uudet tilalle.

Lisäksi tuuria tasoitetaan pelin aikana ansaittavilla kävyillä (pelissä näitä kutsutaan luontomerkeiksi). Pelaaja voi halutessaan käyttää vuorollaan käpyjään, jolloin hän voi valita minkä tahansa tarjolla olevista laatoista ja eläinmerkeistä - niiden ei siis tarvitse olla valmis pari, kuten normaalisti pitäisi. Vaihtoehtoisesti pelaaja voi käyttää kävyn vaihtaakseen haluamansa määrän eläinmerkkejä uusiin tai säästää ne ja ansaita niistä pisteitä pelin lopussa.

Loistavaa laatoitusta

Niinhän se on, että Cascadia yksinkertaisesti vaan toimii loistavasti. Se on helppo “myydä” ja opettaa uusille pelaajille, siinä on sisältöä juuri sopivasti kestoonsa nähden (ja kestokaan ei kauheasti muutu pelaajamäärästä huolimatta) ja se tuottaa juuri sopivasti pohdittavaa olematta liian kevyt tai liian raskas. Tähän mennessä kaikki, joille olen opettanut Cascadian, ovat tykänneet siitä. Yksi ystävä jopa pohti ostavansa kopion pelistä myös itselleen pelaamisen jälkeen.

Laatikon kyljessä mainittu 10+-ikäsuositus kuulostaa omiin korviin vähän turhan korkealta, sillä en näe mitään syytä, miksi esimerkiksi jo 8+-vuotiaat lapset eivät voisi aivan hyvin pelata Cascadiaa keskenään tai aikuisten kanssa ja pärjätä siinä. Tietysti vähemmän pelanneelle lapselle sekä elinympäristö- että eläinpisteytysten miettiminen ja suunnitteleminen etukäteen voi olla haastavaa. Toisaalta, säännöissä esitellään myös erillinen “perhevariantti”, jossa eläimistä saa pisteitä lajiryhmittymien suuruuden perusteella ja jossa voi myös jättää pois kilpailun suurimmista yhtenäisistä elinympäristöistä.

Cascadian pelaamista helpottaa varmasti jatkossa myös pohjoismainen laitos, joka ilmestynee joulukuun puolella. Toivoisinkin, että Cascadia löytäisi tiensä mahdollisimman monen perheen pukinkonttiin, sillä onhan se vain mainio (perhe)peli! Sinällään Cascadia ei tuo lautapelitarjontaan mitään upouutta tai ennennäkemätöntä, mutta yhdistelee tuttuja ja mielekkäitä pelimekaniikkoja luoden sen verran sujuvan ja viihdyttävän kokonaisuuden, että sitä pelaa mielellään. Eikä mainitsemani Beth Sobelin kuvitus haittaa yhtään, vaan tekee pelistä vieläpä miellyttävän katsella.

Enpä tosiaan keksi erityisesti mitään kritisoitavaa Cascadiasta. Jos nyt aivan rupean nillittämään, niin voisinhan tietysti ihmetellä, miten pelissä voi olla preerialaatta, jolle voi asettaa vain lohen, sillä en pysty käsittämään, miten lohi eleleskelee preerialla.. Okei, ehkä pelaajat, joita kiinnostaa lähinnä raskaat, pitkät ja monisääntöiset pelit, eivät aivan hirveästi saisi iloa Cascadiasta. Minulle Cascadia kuitenkin edustaa hienosti nykyaikaista pelisuunnittelua, jossa parhaimmillaan yhdistyy kompakti kokonaisuus kauniiseen ulkokuoreen. Vahva suositus täältä siis Cascadialle!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Why Every Turn in Cascadia Matters

I've never really been what you might call an "impulse buyer." I've made a lot of purchases throughout my life of things that I wanted, and I'd say that at least 95% of them were carefully thought out and well researched beforehand.

This was not the case with Cascadia. The story of how I got into this game pretty much amounts to me walking into my LGS, seeing a moose on the cover of a box, and thinking "oh my God, it's a moose. I'm getting it." So I got it, not even bothering to realize until I opened up the box that it was not a moose, but in fact, an elk. Regardless, I've played through a few times with various amounts of people (including solo) and I wanted to give my thoughts.

Overview

Cascadia is a tile and token drafting game where players compete to build a diverse habitat, yet cohesive ecosystem. Once tiles and tokens are chosen, they are immediately replaced so that all players have the same number of choices for their turn. Tiles all have various habitats and biomes on them, and can support various combinations of the game's 5 species. Nature tokens are given for placing animals on special, single habitat stiles. Points are scored based on the players' ability to place their animal tokens in predetermined configurations, as noted on the game's scoring cards, as well as by maximizing the size of each biome on your map, with bonuses given for the largest of each type of biome.

The Good

Cascadia does not have any direct conflict built in, but at times players can "sabotage" each other by grabbing a particularly hot animal token that pops up, forcing them to rethink their strategy or use up resources for a better chance at getting what they want. However, after several plays with friends, I've found that it's often more fun to help each other. While this is a competitive game by nature (ha, nature), it has made for some excellent memories to see someone building a massive line of salmon or a wall of moose (sorry, I mean "elk") 3 tiles thick, and to sit there hoping that they get the tile and token that they need to complete their goal.

Speaking of goals...the achievement system is just what I've been missing from competitive board games! The winner of each game gets to write their name in the rule book while filling in a previously unfulfilled achievement (Scored 80+ points, Scored 10+ points for 1 animal, Won without X animal, etc.). This guarantees an extra level of depth in the competition, not to mention the replayability that it gives. I can imagine a situation where I'm 50+ games in, still trying to get that dang achievement for having 10 Nature tokens at the end of the game (I mean come on, that means getting a nature token 50+% of your turns, and then never spending a single one. Did I mention you also have to win?). More games should definitely implement this system.

The components I think are mostly very well made. The habitat tiles and nature tokens are standard cardboard cutout, but they seem hefty enough that they will survive many plays over without worry of getting bent or starting to split. I will say that the animal tokens, while good in general, do seem to have a small risk of chipping, as the animal images on the wood tokens seem to just be pasted on like a sticker, instead of painted or engraved. I haven't had any actual problems with this yet, but I do worry that after several plays, this could become a problem.

The Bad

There isn't much to say in the "bad" department about this game, however I think it's worth noting the high potential for games to be won or lost in just a couple of turns. You could be happily grouping your animals together in the perfect form, and oh my goodness wouldn't it just be lovely if you had just one more bear to maximize your points, only to find that for the last 5 turns (a whole 25 percent!) there's not a single bear to be found. Or if there is, of course you aren't going to get it, because the person whose turn is before you is going to take it, and now their bears are better than yours. Now, you aren't going to win or lose a game based on just one animal, and a good strategist will probably have a backup plan in case the primary animal they need isn't available. But sometimes it just won't be the case that any of the animals or habitats you need are available to take, and your hopes of winning can easily be dashed away.

In a recent play, this basically happened, except I was the one with the better bears. On the very last turn of the game, I lucked into the only remaining bear in the bag, which secured my victory by a meager 2 points. Had I not gotten that, I would've lost by 3 or 4. In a game where each turn amounts to roughly 4-5 points, a margin of victory of only 2 is really noteworthy. Every turn matters in Cascadia, and I think that it is moreso the case in this game than in many other games. Just 1 or 2 poor placements of tiles can mess up an entire strategy. In that way, I think this game is somewhat heavier than some other games in the genre.

Conclusion

All being said, I think Cascadia is a very worthwhile addition to my collection, and I am looking forward to many many more plays, hoping to unlock new achievements, and really explore everything it has to offer. Overall, I give it 8.5/10.

This is my first review ever pls be nice

That was a good review! (You didn't need the teeny tiny font at the end).

But I really wanted to comment on this:

Quote:

...and thinking "oh my God, it's a moose. I'm getting it."

LoL... I got a great chuckle out of that, because that's me too! Being an ex-Alaskan, I stop in my tracks (no pun intended) whenever I see a Moose something, and wonder where I could put it in my home.

Glad I could make you laugh! Alaska is beautiful but I couldn't imagine living there

Joel Wright

@JoelWright14

Alaska is beautiful but I couldn't imagine living there

Yeah, it's not for everybody. But at least when I lived there, it's advantages far outweighed its disadvantages.

Great review! In relation to the bad, this is partly mitigated by being able to use your nature tokens to remove animal tokens and replace them. Of course, the element of randomness remains, but I think it's not as bad as with some other, similar, games.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Purple Phoenix Games Review

Original is found at: http://www.purplephoenixgames.com/cascadia-review/

We haven’t had a Golden Feather winner in quite some time, but Cascadia has done it! This tile-laying, token-drafting spatial puzzle impressed both Travis and me from our very first play. The artwork alone makes it fun to have on the table, and the strategy offered within is what takes it over the top. If you haven’t had a chance yet to check out Cascadia, get your hands on a copy ASAP. You won’t be disappointed. Read on to see why.

Cascadia is a game for 1-4 players in which players will be drafting tiles and tokens, placing them in their tableau, and creating a geographic expanse to earn end-game points. To setup for the game, create the stacks of Habitat Tiles (depending on the player count), and place them face-down in the middle of the table. Put all the Wildlife Tokens in the cloth bag and shake it up. Randomly choose a Wildlife Scoring Card for each of the 5 different types of Wildlife, and set them off to the side within view of all players. Create a face-up ‘market’ of 4 Habitat Tiles from the stacks, and draw 4 Wildlife Tokens from the bag, one at a time, and pair them each with a Habitat Tile. Nature Tokens are placed off to the side, and each player receives a random Starter Habitat Tile. Choose a starting player, and the game is ready to begin! Pictured below is the setup for a 3-player game.

Over a series of turns, players will be drafting pairs of Habitat Tiles and Wildlife Tokens and adding them to their environment (personal tableau). To start your turn, you will select a Habitat Tile/Wildlife Token pair from the market. The pairs in the market are set, and you must select a given pairing. Once you have picked your Habitat Tile and Wildlife Token, you will add them to your environment. Habitat Tiles are added to your environment with the following restrictions: the new tile must be placed adjacent to a tile already in your environment, and you may not place a Habitat Tile on top of another. So basically, you can add it anywhere in your environment, as long as it shares at least one side with another previously placed tile. Matching terrain types is not a placement rule, but it can earn you points at the end of the game, so place those tiles wisely!

Your Wildlife Token will be placed on a Habitat Tile in your environment with these restrictions: the Habitat Tile cannot already have a Wildlife Token on it, and the Habitat Tile you choose must have the matching Wildlife symbol on it. So don’t go trying to place Salmon in the mountains or forest! If you are unable to, or choose not to, place your Wildlife Token on your turn, simply return it to the bag. Certain Habitat Tiles are marked and considered Keystone Tiles, and placing a matching Wildlife Token on these will earn you a Nature Token. Nature Tokens can be used to take any pair of Habitat Tile/Wildlife Token during the start of your turn, or can be used to wipe the market and replace it (in case there are no choices you like!). So earning those Nature Tokens comes in handy for sure. At the end of your turn, after you have added your Habitat Tile and Wildlife Token to your environment, refill the market. Draw a face-down Habitat Tile and place it in the market row, and randomly draw a Wildlife Token from the bag to be paired with it. Your turn now ends, and play continues clockwise.

Once there are no more face-down Habitat Tiles to add to the market at the end of a player’s turn, the game ends and final scoring takes place. The first to score are the Wildlife Scoring Cards you randomly selected at the start of the game. Based on the placement of the 5 types of Wildlife Tokens in your environment, you will earn points for fulfilling their requirements. For example, Bears score for groups of adjacent Bear tokens, depending on how many Bears make up the group. Next, Habitat Tiles are scored for groups of matching terrain. You earn 1 point per tile of your biggest contiguous group of each of the 5 terrain types. When everyone has figured out their individual Habitat Tile scores, they now compare them to each other to see which player has the largest group of matching terrain amongst all players. Whomever has the largest of each terrain type earns extra bonus points! And finally, players earn 1 point for any Nature Tokens they still have at the end of the game. Add up the scores, and the player with the highest total is declared the winner!

As you could probably tell from our rating graphic and my intro, we absolutely love this game. The gameplay, strategy, components, theme, and artwork all meld together to create an excellent gaming experience. The gameplay itself is relatively simple – select a Tile/Token pair and place it in your environment. And that’s where the simplicity ends. The strategic options offered by Cascadia are seemingly endless, as you have many different paths to victory. First, you have the Wildlife Scoring Cards with the 5 different types of Wildlife represented in the game, that’s already 5 different routes you can go down in your attempt to earn points. And with a variety of scoring cards for each type of Wildlife and drawing one randomly each game, no two games will be the same. Next, you have your Habitat Tiles. The placement rules are pretty unrestricted, which means you can build your environment however you want. But with that comes 2 strategic elements to keep in mind. How can you place your Habitat Tiles to populate with Wildlife and earn points from those Scoring Cards? And how can you place your Habitat Tiles in a way to earn you points for each of the 5 different types of terrain? You have to always be thinking ahead with your strategy, because your Habitat Tile placement can offer more than one way to score points. You can’t just pick one area to focus on – success requires a balance of all strategic elements. And figuring out how to keep that balanced means your strategy is always changing and adapting each turn. Obviously, I give this game high praise for its gameplay and strategic implications.

To touch on components for a moment – they’re great. The Wildlife Tokens are nice wooden discs with the art printed on one side. The Habitat Tiles are thick, chunky cardboard that will definitely hold up to many plays. The Wildlife Scoring Cards are large, sturdy, and comprehensible. And can I mention the artwork?? Beth Sobel has done it again with another fantastically illustrated game. The colors, the attention to detail, the style – I could just sit and look at this game and have a good time. Of course I’d rather play it, but admiring it is pretty enjoyable too.

When Cascadia originally came out, I read all the hype about it and was intrigued. But I was never able to get my hands on a copy until quite some time later. And now I’m kicking myself for not making more of an effort earlier to grab a copy. Because this game is just awesome. I can absolutely see this staying in my collection forever, as all of its elements just hit the spot for me. Like I said earlier, if you haven’t had a chance to play Cascadia yet, do it as soon as possible. If your gaming tastes are similar to mine, then I think you’ll be in love too. As I’m writing this, I’m thinking about how I would play differently next time and what my main strategy would be. And to me, that’s the sign of a great game – it’s on your mind when you’re not even gaming. Purple Phoenix Games awards Cascadia with a Golden Feather Award. It is well deserved for sure!

One of my favorites. I keep coming back to it. Played over 150 times and still cannot crack 105.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia solo review - Is it really the 2022 Spiel des Jahres?

This article was first published with pictures on my blog: https://www.inthenapoftime.com/cascadia-solo-review-is-it-re...

What is Cascadia?

Cascadia is a puzzly tile-laying game about nature and animals. In this game you take turns building wildlife areas and populating those with different kinds of animals. Everyone starts with a starting tile consisting of all the five habitats and throughout the game you will add tiles and animals to this tile, building your own wildlife area. The goal is to build large areas of each type of habitat and to satisfy the scoring card for each animal as best you can.

How to play

You start the game by selecting one of the four scoring cards for each animal. Giving you five cards with scoring conditions/possibilities. Then you grab a starting tile which consists of three tiles joined together and all five of the terrain types available in the game. You grab the appropriate amount of tiles (depending on the number of players) and stack those of to the side. You will then draw four of them, these are the tiles on display. Below each tile you will place a random animal token drawn from the bag. You now have the four pairs you can pick from to add to your tableau.

After the setup each round will consist of you picking and adding a pair to you tableau. You can add the tile anywhere (terrain types don’t have to match) but matching terrain types will benefit you in the end because you can score points for bigger terrains. You can also add the animal token anywhere, as long as the animal is represented on the tile that you pick. If you pick a tile which is meant for a single animal you will receive a nature token (pinecone). This token can be traded in for the opportunity to pick a random tile and animal from the display without them having to be a pair.

How do you play Cascadia solo?

Solo Cascadia plays very similar to multiplayer Cascadia. You start the game with 43 tiles (like in a two player game), a four tile display and the five scoring cards. The difference is that whenever you grab a pair from the display the rightmost pair will be removed from the game. The leftover two pairs of tiles and tokens will move to the right. You will add two new pairs to the display from the left. Removing the pair simulates a second player but you know exactly which pair will be removed. This is something you can take into account when choosing the pair you want.

When you are no longer able to add tiles to the display to make a complete set of four pairs the game will end and you will calculate your score. Scoring cards work the same way as in the multiplayer game. Having the largest area of a type of terrain works a little bit different though. In the multiplayer you get a bonus if you have the largest area. In the solo game you get two bonus points for each area that is bigger than seven. Every area smaller than seven only scores the area but doesn’t get the bonus points.

Besides the beat your own score solo variant there is also a sort of campaign or achievement track to spice up your gameplay. When you decide to undertake this you will start on a track and try to fulfil increasingly difficult challenges. Every scenario will add a new layer to the game.

How much time does it take?

A solo game of Cascadia will run you somewhere between 30 and 45 minutes on average. Depending on how much time you take for each decision. The layout of the box makes it easy to setup the game in a few minutes. So setup and teardown hardly take any time.

What I think of the game

When I first heard about Cascadia I questioned if it would be a game for me. I usually like bigger and longer games so this cute and short nature game didn’t immediately grab my attention. But I kept hearing about it everywhere, especially in all the solo gaming communities I’m in. so I got curious and decided to hunt down a copy. And I’m glad I did! The game might not look complex but the choices you have can really melt you brain sometimes. “Do I add this salmon here so I can make a longer row? But then I deny myself the opportunity to have a pair of bears here. And if I add this tile here it stops me from expending this area any further this way.” It’s simultaneously satisfying to see your nature reserve grow with every turn and frustrating to know you can never have it all.

I’ve now played this game over a dozen times and I’ve really grown to love it. It’s easy to grab and setup but will also challenge me. And if you’re less in the mood for a challenge you can always take it less seriously and just enjoy laying the tiles and building a beautiful tableau.

So to answer the question from the title, yes for me this game deserves the reward it has been given. This game has something for everyone. It can be played multiplayer and solitaire. You can go all-in and melt your brain or you can enjoy a relaxing half hour of laying tiles and tokens. The solo game plays very similarly to the multiplayer and it doesn’t feel like you are missing out on anything. And the achievements/scenarios add a nice layer of longevity to the game.

Thanks for the review. I was able to buy a copy online yesterday. Am looking forward to playing this. With the solo it's nice to know I go full in or to take it easy and have a relaxing meditative experience.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia: Enjoying the View (A Cardboard Reflection Review)

Cascadia just won the 2022 Spiel des Jahres. Based in Germany, the SdJ awards the Game of the Year to the family-friendly game that “seems best suited to promote the cultural asset of board games in society.”

By that criteria, I think that it absolutely deserves the award.

I also think that the game is…pleasant.

I know, not the most compelling review for a game.

Don’t get me wrong, I am thrilled for the designer Randy Flynn and the publisher Flatout Games. I enjoy the game. Cascadia is extremely easy to get to the table. I have, in fact, done so more than I have its “sister” game Calico, a game realized within the same year as Cascadia, which leads to the inevitable comparisons between the two.

But first, Cascadia itself. Set in Northwest America, Cascadia is, in essence, two tile-laying puzzles in one.

The first is comprised of five geographical elements that make up Northwest America. Each hexagon has either one or two ecosystems and players lay a tile one by one, in an effort to build the largest of each of the six terrains.

The second puzzle involves five animals. Each tile contains one, two, or three animal symbols. When an animal token is chosen, it can only be placed on an empty tile showing that animal. At the beginning of the game, one scoring card from a stack of four possible for each animal is drawn, detailing how each animal will score at the end. Some animals like to be grouped, others fly solo, while others want to meander through.

Salmon and Foxes and Bears. Oh My!

The crux of the game is that each habitat tile and animal token are paired up with each other in an open market of four.

Players choose a pair, place a token, and turn goes to the next player.

Rinse, lather, repeat.

Sum up the score when everyone has placed 20 tiles and tokens. That’s it.

And the fact that I say “That’s it” also explains why the game is good, but not automatically compelling.

There is tension. You see a pair that you desperately want, you have a place for both, but you have to wait until your turn, hoping that someone doesn’t take that very pair. That waiting anticipation is always fun.

There is strategy. From the beginning, it’s usually pretty obvious which animals are high scoring ones and which are lowest (looking at you Fox). This leads to one of two situations. Either everyone will be gunning for the very same animal, creating a low supply/high demand for that particular animal or that animal refuses to show up when the market is replenished. Meaning you have a choice of either going for that really popular one, or continuously taking the foxes and gain points by sheer volume.

The issue reveals itself when the game is done and all that is left is the scoring. There are multiple ways to gain points, and bonus points, and extra points. Before you score, you might beat yourself up for neglecting a certain feature or not completing an animal condition. But after all is said and done, you realize that it didn’t make that much of a difference. You have usually made up the difference in some other area and might even wind up winning the game.

One Elk to Rule Them All

Over the numerous times we have played this game, there were many that were decided by one point. Usually, that kind of game ending is exciting. But with Cascadia and it’s many scoring options, it’s difficult to say which strategy lead to that victory. So instead of moments where the victor proclaims “Whoo, did it!”, it leads more to “Huh, look at that.”

In an odd way, Cascadia is too forgiving. Besides the score, there is no compelling reason to make a certain move. On one hand, there is the refreshing sense of freedom of doing whatever you want to do and then see how you did. On the other, there’s no reward either save for Keystone tiles. These are tiles with only one animal possibility which, when fulfilled, gives you a singular pine cone that either manipulates the market or is worth points at the end.

This brings back round Cascadia’s sister game, Calico. While the obvious comparison between the two is the ability to manipulate the market in Cascadia and wish it was available in Calico, there is a much more subtle difference to note.

When playing Calico, you get rewarded along the way as you play. Complete three colors, get a button. Complete a pattern, get a cat. Then there is the other side of the coin, where you have the excruciating feeling that you are not going to be able to complete all objectives, and so you fill in the space with something else, closing off that scoring possibility.

Cascadia doesn’t have that coin.

I realize this is an odd criticism. It’s like going to Yosemite National Park and complaining there are no rollercoasters.

Cascadia made no promise to provide such an experience. Considering the setting, it would oddly feel out of place if it did.

But it would still be nice to earn something along the way. A little reward that let’s you know when you get the fourth elk, or successfully join two ecosystems, that you’re doing well. Instead of only counting the points at the very end.

There is nothing revolutionary here, but not every game needs to be. There’s something to be said about having a pleasant journey, rather than one that crushes your brain or your opponents.

Sometimes, when you go someplace new, you just want to be able sit back and enjoy the scenery.

It’s what Spiel des Jahres saw in Cascadia. And I do see it too. They aren’t looking to necessarily reward innovation or boundary-pushing experiences. They are looking for games that propel games to familie’s tables. Which Cascadia does very well.

If you enjoyed this review and want to check out more, please visit the website cardboardrelection.com

Jeff McLeod

@cardboard\_reflection

The first is comprised of six geographical elements that make up Northwest America.

Mountains, Forests, Prairies, Wetlands, and Rivers. I don't believe there is a sixth type.

James R. Gracen

@CavemanLogic

Jeff McLeod

@cardboard\_reflection

The first is comprised of six geographical elements that make up Northwest America.

Mountains, Forests, Prairies, Wetlands, and Rivers. I don't believe there is a sixth type.

You are totally correct. Typo. Thank you for pointing it out. It’s now been fixed.

A light and fun family game but vastly overrated imo.

Yezzenia Watler

@YezOz

A light and fun family game but vastly overrated imo.

I share your opinion.

David B

@pfctsqr

Yezzenia Watler

@YezOz

A light and fun family game but vastly overrated imo.

I share your opinion.

Same here. Played once with my family (several times with other players), no one has asked to play it again. Which is disappointing because I had high hopes.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Board Game Breakdown - Cascadia In-Depth Review

This review was originally posted on my website at Board Game Breakdown Please visit for more reviews.

Overview

Cascadia was my first venture into backing anything on Kickstarter. The advent of becoming a backer for this wonderful looking game brought on a new excitement which was only fueled more when I got an email letting me know that the “Print-N-Play” files were ready to download. I have dabbled in PnP games a few times, but nothing stuck. That changed with Cascadia. I played the PnP version for weeks after, even getting my kids involved. I originally wrote this review based on parts of the PnP version, but I have gone back and revised to cover the Kickstarter version of the game.

In my original review, I mentioned I thought that this game was going to make a big splash with certain people, and I’m not surprised that this was a correct assumption. At the time of this revision, Cascadia sits at number 72 on the BGG.com Hot 100 List and is number 1 in the “Abstract” category and in my opinion, it deserves this spot wholeheartedly.

Rulebook and Setup

When I think of Cascadia, one of the first things I think about is the rulebook, which is a really strange thing as this isn’t typical of most games. Sure, the rulebook looks beautiful and is concise and straight-forward when laying out all the aspects of the game, but those aren’t the reasons I think about it. The reason I think about it is found in the last collection of pages in the book, and this is the section that details all the different “scenarios” and “achievements” to try out (called the Cascadia Achievement System.) A lot of the games that came out in the past year have implemented a similar concept and I’m loving this trend. The surge of endorphins I get when I’ve reached a goal enhances the solo variant of any game I play.

The first page (of the Cascadia Achievement System section) lays out a map of the Cascadia region with space for five different players to record their trek through the region. The trek is represented by meeting more and more achievements as you continue to play. The next few pages after the map, hold the different achievements for you to reach. If you are a video game player, you might recognize this style of incentive, instantly thinking of the little Xbox sound and graphic popping up on your screen, communicating that you have killed enough players with a certain firearm or scanned a certain amount of fauna on an alien planet.

Some of the achievements direct you to play with a certain combination of the animal scoring cards, called a scenario. To be successful at the achievement, you must not only score a minimum of X points, but you also must do it by scoring at least 3 animal Y objectives. Elsewhere, achievements modify the rules slightly for your next game, forcing you to play with no pinecone tokens available. As you meet the achievements, you fill in another marker on the map, illustrating your continued trek and growing expertise of the Cascadia region. I played two nights in a row recently, working on achievement 5 in both. I failed the first night by quite a bit, but on the second night, when I finally drew the last Red-Tailed Hawk token I needed and ended up beating the achievement by a single point, I was filled with joy. I actually felt like I achieved the achievement. It is the simple things in life, right?

Setup literally only takes 5 minutes (or so my scribbles in OneNote tell me from the notes I took last night during a play through.) The largest chunk of time is sunk in pulling out the 43 habitat tiles (from the full complement of 85) to play the solo version. The amount of habitat tiles varies on player count but is always a number which allows a set number of 20 rounds per player. The rest of the setup is making sure all 100 animal tokens are in the Cascadia branded draw-string bag. When I was obsessed with the PnP version, I was carrying mine around in a paper bag. (Note: my wife says it looks like I am heading to the middle school cafeteria to play Magic the Gathering…. Do middle schoolers even play that anymore?) You also need to choose one scoring card for each of the five animals. Put a pin in the scoring cards because this is one of my favorite aspects of the game, so I will come back to that. The player flips over four of the habitat tiles, lines them up in the middle of the table, and grabs four animal tokens from the bag, placing one animal token under each habitat tile. You just grab yourself a starter tile (basically three habitat tiles joined together) and you are ready to go!

Components

There aren’t a ton of fancy components in Cascadia but the game is better for it. It is streamlined, it is portable, and it carries no extra baggage with it. The 85 habitat tiles are printed on quality cardboard that feels nice in your hands as you draft from the middle of the table. The artwork on the tiles themselves is pretty standard for a tile laying game but the regions are easy to differentiate, so no real complaints there.

Along with the habitat tiles, you get 100 animal tokens. These are small wooden tokens, printed in one of five colors and printed with one of the five animal species you are playing with. I appreciate that the design team went with wooden tokens instead of carboard chits as it gives the game a higher quality feel. The game also comes with a bag to put the tokens into for drawing purposes, a handful of carboard pinecone chits, and a score pad.

The last component you’ll receive are the scoring cards and these are my favorite parts of the game, so I want to talk about them in some depth. As mentioned above, there are five species of animals represented on the tokens and each of these has a unique scoring card. Not only do they have a unique scoring card per species, but each species also actually ships with four different cards and Kickstarter backers are awarded with a fifth scoring card for each species! The mixing of these scoring card for each game gives each game a different feeling and greatly increases re-playability.

The five species focused on in the game are: Grizzly Bear, Roosevelt Elk, Chinook Salmon, Red-Tailed Hawk, and the Red Fox. Honestly, I do not know much about how these animals interact with their habitats, their prey, their predators, or each other. But what I do know is, the designers of Cascadia make me feel that the different scoring objectives correspond with their species nicely. An example might be that most of the Red-Tailed Hawk objectives score you points for hawk tokens that have a direct line of sight to another hawk token but that are non-adjacent. On the other hand, a lot of the Grizzly Bear objectives revolve around creating small groups of one, two, or three bear tokens but not more than three and these groups should never be adjacent. Again, I have no clue if these characteristics relate to these species in any way in the natural world, but the game makes me feel like they might and that is all that matters to me. Much like variable player powers, I am a sucker for variable scoring conditions. Something about having to change my strategy slightly to meet the new conditions from game-to-game just hits the right chord for me as a gamer.

Gameplay

On a turn, the player chooses one habitat tile as well as the corresponding animal token under it, and places it in their ecosystem they are building. Once placed, the tile and the token is replaced and the turn moves to the next player. Rinse and repeat till you have completed 20 rounds (at which you will be out of habitat tiles to refill the row) and you are done. There are a few instances where you can modify what is in the row, but this goes quick enough, and you are right back into the action. These instances will mainly revolve around when you choose to spend a pinecone token, which you are rewarded when you place an animal token in a “Keystone” habitat. Basically, these habitat tiles only have one individual type of animal that can be placed and are only ever made up of one habitat type. When you spend a pinecone token, you can choose one habitat tile and one animal token from the row, no matter if they are paired together. This gives you some leeway when you really need a certain animal to meet an objective, but really do not need the habitat tile it is paired with. Other instances include when too many of the same animal species tokens appear in the row (called Overpopulation) and they must be replaced with a new draw from the bag.

The game is relatively fast and doesn’t outstay it’s welcome. Like many other abstract games, it might feel more like a puzzle to some than a board game and I can’t fault anyone for that opinion, but to me, I like the puzzle aspect. There are actually two puzzles going on at once and that is something I really like. I mentioned the animal scoring cards already, but the players also get points for connecting tiles of the same region. It feels freeing knowing that I’m allowed to place my tiles anywhere and they don’t have to match with their adjacent neighbors but if I decide to do it, I can score some bonus points at game end.

My biggest complaint is that there just isn’t a lot of interaction between players. Yes, one of the main mechanics is open drafting tiles so there is always a chance that you take a tile your opponent needs but I find that it’s rare that you get stuck with a set of tiles that won’t somehow work into your environment. Most of my play throughs against an opponent, I’ve never once even glanced at their side of the table as it just doesn’t have any bearing on what I’m doing.

Conclusion

Cascadia is a superb and fun tile-laying game that knows what it is and does that thing very well. This was one of my favorite releases of 2021 and never find myself getting bored of it. The different combinations of scoring cards matched with the Cascadia Achievement System offers plenty of re-playability, especially for a solo gamer, and I continue to trek through this wonderful game time and time again. If you’re looking for a quick abstract, with barely any setup, and that is surprisingly portable, make sure to check out Cascadia.

Rating

Ratings are based on 5 main criteria: rulebook, setup, components, art & graphic design, and gameplay. The first 4 criteria are rated 1 to 5 and the gameplay is rated 1 to 10. These scores culminate in an “overall satisfaction” score that is rated from 1 to 10. If the reviewed game has both a solo and multiplayer mode, I have assigned scores separately to give context to which mode we enjoy more.

Rulebook - 5

Setup - 5

Components - 3

Art/Graphic Design - 4

Gameplay (Solo) - 8

Gameplay (Multiplayer) - 7

Overall Satisfaction (Solo) - 8.3

Overall Satisfaction (Multiplayer) - 8.0

Nice review. Thanks for sharing. I've personally played this twice and It was underwhelming. I don't know if am missing something but it felt very repetitive to me. I have only played with 2 players though so there's that. Maybe it's a whole different vibe with 3+.

Thanks for reading! My wife also feels underwhelmed by this and I thought she would love it.

I also felt underwhelmed. It lacks the spice I find in many other tile laying games. I think Kingdomino, another SdJ winning family weight tile laying game, is miles better than this one.

David B

@pfctsqr

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Thanks for the comment, David. We also own Kingdomino but I've never felt the need to play it over Cascadia.

I think that's the beauty of this hobby though. We all have our own unique tastes but can still be a part of a greater community!

Kristofer Solomon

@Board\_Game\_Breakdown

David B

@pfctsqr

I also felt underwhelmed. It lacks the spice I find in many other tile laying games. I think Kingdomino, another SdJ winning family weight tile laying game, is miles better than this one.

Thanks for the comment, David. We also own Kingdomino but I've never felt the need to play it over Cascadia.

I think that's the beauty of this hobby though. We all have our own unique tastes but can still be a part of a greater community!

Exactly. I own Kingdomino. Played it a couple times... But, Cascadia has been a hit! Much more fun. I don't see myself going back to Kingdomino very often (if at all) now that I own Cascadia. The combination of tile drafting to bump your Habitat Scoring combined with the token drafting to bump your Wildlife Scoring opportunities is a lot of fun. sometimes you need to take one, to the detriment of the other, based on what the other players at the table are doing. For instance, if I see an opponent trying to outscore me on River tiles, I may take an available River tile, even though I don't necessarily want the Wildlife token it comes with (or else be forced to spend a Nature Token, which is a guaranteed point, to grab a different Wildlife token instead).

I love the decisions in this game much better than in Kingdomino.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia, a Board Stupid review

Introduction

Cascadia is a habitat tile & animal token drafting game, where players seek to layout the most accommodating wilderness for their creatures to live. Taking turns to pick up one new habitat and its paired animal token, the aim is to make the longest contiguous terrain corridors whilst meeting the animal placing criteria set out on the chosen scoring cards. Bears may want to be in pairs while your hawks tend to fly solo and only in the spaces that can host them. Balance these two scoring ideas and you’re onto a winner.

Production rating 3.5/5

Featuring artwork from Beth Sobel (of Wingspan fame), this is a simple but delightful game to see. Comprising 80+ chunky cardboard habitat tiles and 100 wooden wildlife tokens stored in a gorgeous cloth bag, along with 25 pinecone ‘Nature’ tokens, 4 sets of high-quality scoring cards and a scoring pad, there’s little to question here. The designs are clear, functional, and evocative of the Pacific Northwest that inspired the game. By the end of play, you’ll have built a very pleasing run of rivers, towering mountains, and dense forests.

Our only slight drawback is that certain wildlife tokens, for our liking, were a little garish for the otherwise muted colour pallet.

Complexity weight: very light / light / medium / heavy / very heavy

The basic premise of Cascadia could barely be more simple: pick a habitat tile & animal token to add to your existing wilderness, matching them as best you can to what is already there.

The visual style helps drive the planning to some degree, as your decision can be guided by what you think looks nice on your ‘map’. The habitat will tell you what animals can go where and there’s an organic learning process which balances habitat placement against the required animal patterns. If you want to make the longest possible river then go for it, but you might not be able to have your foxes in the midst of all your other animals or have a home for your elk if you do!

Certain placements will earn you a ‘Nature’ token which can be used to modify your turn somewhat. They allow you to pick any desired combination of tokens on display, rather than the fixed pairings of a standard turn; or even to reset the available animal selection altogether. Too many salmon for your liking? Spend that token and see if any hawks turn up instead.

End game scoring counts up your longest run of each of the five terrain types, with a point for each connected tile and a bonus for the player with the absolute longest per type. Animal placement is then scored against the chosen score set, e.g. runs of salmon with an increasing value per fish. Add it all together and see what you get.

Theme gameplay integration 2/5

This is arguably an abstract game with little need for this theme, the game could technically function with an entirely different theme or perhaps no theme at all. However, we feel that the pastoral stylings are a perfect fit and Simon particularly enjoys the way it ties together. Draw a mountain tile with a bear token? Perfect. Foxes in your woodland? Yes please. So, not essential but wonderfully fitting.

Does it respect your time?

Absolutely. Setup couldn’t be quicker, simply placing the first 4 tiles and tokens next to the scoring cards.

Each player takes a total of 20 turns, with each turn taking no more than a handful of seconds as you pick your tile/token combo. Later game deliberations may stretch this thought process a little as you try to maximise your habitat placement but once you’ve made your choice, play can pass to the next person while you choose exactly where to place them.

Final rating 4/5 (Fun value for your money)

+ Simple and accessible gameplay with a relaxing pace. The randomly drawn tiles and tokens keeps you interested but you still have time to enjoy what other people are achieving on their turns. You get to see your progress play out in front of you turn by turn which is vastly satisfying.

- The theme won’t be to everyone’s taste but if the box art catches your eye, you’ll likely enjoy it. Those that suffer from Analysis Paralysis may struggle to enjoy this unless they accept that you can’t have it all, there’s no perfect choice each round!

You can listen to our podcast episode on this game here, or via your favorite podcast service by searching for Board Stupid. You can also find us on Instagram and Facebook @boardstupidUK.

Thanks for reading!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia - A Detailed Review

Image Courtesy of W Eric Martin

This review continues my series of detailed reviews that attempt to be part review, part resource for anyone not totally familiar with the game. For this reason I expect readers to skip to the sections that are of most interest.

If you liked the review please thumb the top of the article so others have a better chance of seeing it and I know you stopped by. If you thumb the bottom as well, I consider that a bonus. Thanks for reading.

Summary

Game Type – Family Tile Laying Game

Play Time: 30-45 minutes (20-25 minutes solo)

Number of Players: 1 - 4

Mechanics – Tile Placement, Open Drafting, Set Collection, Pattern Building, Solo\Solitaire Game, Variable Set-up, Hexagon Grid

Difficulty – Pick-up & Play (Can be learned in about 20 minutes)

Components – Excellent

Artist(s) – Beth Sobel

Release – 2021

Awards – Spiel des Jahres (2022)

Designer – Randy Flynn – (Debut Game)

Overview and Theme

I love it when a game teaches me something new and Cascadia is the name for the nature corridor that exists along the north-west coast of the USA and Canada, starting in British Columbia and Yukon Territory and as you head south, entering regions within Washington, Oregon and Idaho. For those not familiar with the lingo associated with this part of the world, it is called the Pacific Northwest. It is an environmentally diverse region that is home to many species of animal and flora and the game is something of a homage to a part of the world that is thoroughly enjoyed (hiking, camping etc) by the designers and publishers.

From a game perspective, the players are tasked with creating their own wonderful habitat in the Cascadia region. They do this by selecting a single terrain tile and an animal on each turn. They must then do their best to lay those tiles in order to create regions of like habitat, which serve as homes to the games 5 featured animal species (which must be placed on suitable habitats). Beyond that the game is all about building the best terrain and animal combinations to best meet the scoring conditions selected at set-up.

Cascadia comes to us from the publishing house that brought to life Calico – Flatout Game Studios . They dedicate a couple of pages of the rulebook to some information about the Cascadia region and the species\habitats that live there (and feature in the game). I really like that. I do believe that the popularity of games like Wingspan have opened up the gaming world to a broader audience and the power of nature\environment themes in games. It has become apparent since then that gamers too, are looking for more diversity of theme and are interested in learning more about the subject matter featured within the games they play.

Cascadia does show a love for the subject matter and I think that is great.

It is worth noting that this is the designer's (Randy Flynn ) first published design and he managed to get a straight up walk to the Spiel des Jahres Nominations for best game in 2022. That's no mean feat. The winner will be announced next month (July).

Sandy, pass me my hiking shoes…it’s the great, wonderful wilderness for us today! Coooo-ee

The Components

Whilst the components are not mind-numbingly amazing, the game is well produced and looks good on the table. Flatout Games know that the gamer audience will play most things regardless, but to help a game appeal to the more casual market (which this game is reaching out to) it needs to be visually appealing and colourful. They succeed in this endeavour.

Starting Player Tiles – These tiles are larger than those used throughout the play. Effectively these are a one-piece tile made up of 3 regular sized tiles.

Each Starting Tile will always feature all 6 of the habitat types (in various configurations) and each one will always feature a Keystone Habitat (a region made up of one Habitat only).

As with all of the tiles featured in the game, they are screen-printed, which offers a lovely finish. The tiles are nice and thick and feel like quality. After close to 40 plays mine are still looking as good as the day I took off the shrink.

Image Courtesy of SergiNS

Habitat Tiles – The Habitat Tiles are one of the main components used in the game. They are hexagonal in nature and each tile will feature a pairing of habitats, unless it is a Keystone Habitat - these only feature a single habitat (and are accompanied by a Nature Token icon). The habitats featured in the game include mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers and prairies.

Each tile will also feature 1 to 3 animal icons. A total of 5 animals are featured in the game, comprising bears, elk, salmon, hawks and foxes.

These features come in all kinds of combinations across the tiles and the Starting Tiles above are no exception.

Each habitat type is well illustrated and specific colours are replicated to make it quite clear what each tile features. Likewise, the animals are all associated with a specific colour - pink for salmon, orange for foxes etc.

The one miss-step that was made is the lack of a clear defining border on some of the terrain edges, with mountains and rivers perhaps being the worst culprits. When tiles are placed beside one another it can become a little unclear as to where one of those terrains ends and the other begins. It isn't a big deal for players that have played a few times but it has been noted by other reviewers and tripped up first-time players on occasion.

It isn't a game breaker but it could have been done better in hindsight.

Image Courtesy of Tania\_Larina

Animal Tokens – The other major component are the animal Tiles. These are lovely wooden discs that feature a single animal icon and they are coloured to match the icons that feature on the tiles.

What I love about these in particular is that the colouring almost comes across like a 'wash', which is most noticeable on the blue Hawk tiles. The downside to that is that the colours are beginning to fade or wear off a little on some tiles in my copy. That is due to a combination of two things I think - the nature of fishing around in the bag and tiles rubbing against one another and my 37 plays at the time of this review being posted.

It isn't enough to worry me and it is minor, but I thought it worth mentioning. At 37 plays so far, this game doesn't owe me anything.

Image Courtesy of henk.rolleman

Nature Tokens – Smaller tokens in the shape of pinecones are provided. These are nice enough and the shape is certainly more interesting than a generic round token. Enough said.

Image Courtesy of Kicurek

Wildlife (Animal) Scoring Cards – Whilst not the most used component in the game, the whole design is nothing without these Soring Cards. In all there are 4 Scoring Cards provided for each of the 5 animal species that feature in the game.

These cards are large (almost Tarot-sized) in nature and each one features a large illustration of the animal in question. Each card even has 4 pieces of unique art for a given animal and Beth Sobel does a lovely job of illustrating the 5 creatures.

The bottom of each card is then dedicated to the business at hand - how that animal will score. This is done using a combination of three elements - an icon-based graphic, a scoring table and some clarifying text at the bottom of the card.

Even the card-backs are lovely, featuring each animal’s full name (such as the Red-Tailed Hawk) and a silhouette illustration.

The cards all feature a matte-linen finish and they feel lovely in one's hand.

I think the decision to make these cards really big is a great design decision. The players will be referencing them several times in the early part of the game and they are large enough to be seen from across the table and saves the need to pass them around all the time.

Image Courtesy of tabletopmom

Scoring Pad – A 7-Wonders styled scorepad is provided with the top half being dedicated to Animal scoring and the bottom half to Habitat scoring.

The score pad is also double-sided and I still have a heap of them after so many plays already, which is great.

Image Courtesy of Chotacabras

Drawstring Bag – The game comes with a lovely drawstring bag that is labelled with the name of the game. One of the little flourishes is that the bag is covered in contour lines, which is a small nod to hikers and map readers, to which such details are crucial. This is a nice nod to the thematic backdrop of the game.

Hey look, my high school geography finally came back to me!

Image Courtesy of Tania\_Larina

Rules and Family Scoring Card – The rules are well laid out and the text is well spaced, with graphical illustrations throughout.

In another hint that the subject matter is close to the designer's\publisher's hearts, additional information is offered on the Cascadia region and the species and habitats that feature in the game.

Another key point to highlight here are the Challenges that have been included (Calico also had them). I will talk to them later in this review but I think they are a great inclusion and a way to offer an owner greater value and re-playability.

The game also comes with a Family Scoring Card, which allows a family totally new to games to ignore the more complex scoring cards and use the one generic approach to scoring. Gamers will never use such a thing I suspect but I'm sure it has been appreciated by non-gamers as a means to learning the basic flow of the game and not having to grasp the multiple scoring rules featured in the full game.

Image Courtesy of SergiNS

I really can't fault the production of Cascadia apart from the odd minor point. It really is a lovely game to put out on the table, it looks great and those small details speak to the care that Flatout Games have for the production of their games.

I'll say it again, social crowdfunding gets a lot of negative press for various reasons (some which is warranted) but if crowdfunding can produce a game with all these little flourishes and if it means that an artist is getting paid a decent amount as a result (total speculation on my part)...I'm all for it.

I have no doubt that Cascadia would not have enjoyed as much success without some of the little touches that crowdfunding made possible, not to mention that it might also make the company enough money to remain a going concern. I mean, following up Calico with Cascadia is a great track record so far and I look forward to seeing what they come up with next (Verdant if I’m not mistaken).

And no...I have no affiliation with the company or designer. I bought my own copy of the game also.

Image Courtesy of tabletopmom

Set-Up

Cascadia is a simple game to set-up, allowing the players to get to the action in good time. Unless playing with the full complement of 4 players, a number of Habitat Tiles must be selected at random –

2-Players – Remove 42 (Play with 43)

3-Players – Remove 22 (Play with 63)

4-Players – Remove 2 (Play with 83)

So as you can see, there will always be a little variability in the tile set on offer. Tiles can be selected by placing them all face-down on the table and then picking out the required number to remove and placing them back in the box, sight unseen. The tiles left for play are then placed into a few face-down stacks.

Four Habitat Tiles should then be drawn from the stacks and placed face-up in the centre of the table to form a row.

All of the Wildlife Tokens are placed in the drawstring bag (likely this is already the case from the last time the game was packed away) and 4 tokens are drawn at random. These are drawn one at a time and each one is placed next to one of the Habitat Tiles. In this way the game is creating a random pairing - Habitat Tile + Animal Token, which are linked to one another.

The game comes with 4 different scoring cards for each of the 5 animal species featured in the game. For each species, one card should be selected at random and placed face-up to the side of the play area. This will set the guidelines for scoring for all players as the game unfolds.

The Nature Tokens are simply placed in a pile. Each player then receives a Starter Habitat Tile at random.

With a starting player selected in some way, the game is ready to begin.

The Play

The play of Cascadia really is very simple and pitched perfectly for the family and non-gamer markets. But that doesn’t mean that a gamer can’t enjoy the lighter pace and still find some challenge within the design. The flow of play unfolds like this :-

Image Courtesy of kalchio

Select a Habitat Tile and Wildlife Token – The first decision required of a player on their turn is to select one pair of offerings. In many cases the player has no choice but to take a pair (Habitat Tile and Animal Token) that are matched. Their decision will be driven by a combination of the scoring rules in play and what they have already built within their play area.

NB – If a player has a Nature Token in their possession, they can spend one at this moment to give them greater flexibility of choice. The nature Token is returned to the supply and the active player can take any combination of Habitat Tile and Wildlife Token, not just those that are paired to each other.

Place Habitat and Wildlife – The active player is now tasked with placing their tile and the wildlife token they acquired. The only rule of note regarding tile placement is that each tile must connect to at least one other tile, along at least one edge. Of course the players will be trying to create regions of matching terrain for scoring purposes but I’ll cover that in a short while.

Wildlife is a bit more restrictive in that they can only be placed on a Habitat Tile that features the matching animal icon. Each Habitat Tile can only hold a single Wildlife Token and once placed animal tokens cannot be moved in any way. If a player cannot place a Wildlife Token because they do not have an open Habitat Tile (or they do not wish to place it), the token is returned to the Cloth Bag. This is sub-optimal and not recommended.

Earning a Nature Token – If a player manages to place a Wildlife Token onto a keystone habitat (a Habitat Tile that only features the one type of terrain and will only take a specific animal), they earn a Nature Token. These tokens give a player greater flexibility as they allow a Habitat Tile and Wildlife Token to be taken regardless of their position in the row. Aha…flexibility!

Replace the Offerings – With the completion of those two simple actions a player’s turn is over. A new Habitat Tile should be flipped over to return the offering to 4 tiles in all and a new Wildlife Token is drawn from the bag and placed against the newly drawn tile. Of course if a Nature Token was used, the replacement of Tile or Token will be against the location at which they were taken.

Triggering the Endgame – When a player needs to replace a Habitat Tile and the stacks are empty, the game comes to an immediate end and the Scoring takes place. The game is designed and set-up in such a way that all players are assured of having the same number of turns.

Scoring and Finding a Winner – The scoring of the game is aided by the use of a Scoring Pad, which comes in two parts.

The top half relates to wildlife and a space is present to score each of the 5 species featured in the game. How each animal scores is dependent on the scoring cards that were selected during the set-up.

The bottom half of the scoring sheet relates (not surprisingly) to habitats. Each player scores a number of points equal to how many tiles are present in the largest connected region for each habitat. These are referred to as habitat corridors and again the game is teaching us about ecological considerations. This is calculated for each of the 5 habitats featured in the game.

In addition, the players can also earn bonus points for having the largest Habitat Corridors in each of the terrain types, created a subtle form of player interaction as the game is being played.

In a 2-player game the bonus for having the largest Habitat Corridor is 2 points (a tie results in 1 point each, regardless of how many players may be tied).

In a 3 or 4-player game the bonus is 3 points for the largest and 1 point for second place. If 2 players tie for the largest Habitat Corridor, they both get 2 points (no points for anyone else). If more than two players tie for the top spot they all receive 1 point only.

Players can also earn 1 point for each Nature Token they still have, unspent, at the end of the game. Finding a winner is as simple as adding the points earned for all 3 scoring features and the highest total takes the win! Ties are broken by having the most Nature Tokens left over. If that is also tied then the win is shared.

That is Cascadia in a nutshell…err…pinecone.

Image Courtesy of henk.rolleman

The Strategy - What Makes the Game Fun!

Let’s make no mistake, Cascadia is, at its heart, a very simple game. But there are some lovely things about this game that I would like to highlight :-

Relaxation Personified – I think this is one of the delightful features of Cascadia. Players are not fighting the memory of a ruleset here because the flow is so clean and simple that it really can’t be forgotten. Beyond that though, the very theme of the game with its nature-based focus is fresh and relaxing in its own right. The players can create visually appealing landscapes as their play areas grow in size and the light nature of the play makes Cascadia a game that allows for casual conversation as the play unfolds. Not all games allow for that and it makes for a nice change of pace from heavier designs.

Thoughtful Decisions – But the above alone is not enough to make a game really good, if it doesn’t come with some level of interesting and engaging decision making. I find Cascadia to be a really good time from a 'decision to time ratio'. The game has been criticised for being too simple, that the decisions of what to take each turn are fairly obvious from about the mid-point onwards. This is partly true, as the players will have made decisions in the early game that result in certain moves being more rewarding (worth more points) later on.

But I still think the players have enough to think about as they try to maximise their 'scoring puzzles' and do it better than the competition. It certainly does it on a different level to a deeper strategy game, but that doesn't make the game bad...just different.

In addition, I find Cascadia to be thought provoking in relation to what I don't want to leave on the table for my opponents. Trying to marry up this important consideration in conjunction with what will best serve my needs is really where the challenge of Cascadia is to be found. It is a subtle form of player interaction but it is present. Making only a few of these decisions well, being able to ‘make do’ with Plan B if it means I slow them down in that Hawk pattern they are building, is what separates the good Cascadia players from those that manage to squeak out tight wins. But of course the game can be played on a far more casual level as well.

The other key decision point in the game comes early on as the players need to assess how they want to go about building their habitats and the distribution of their Wildlife Tokens in order to make the most of the Scoring Objectives in play. Whilst a player never has full control over what is available at any given time, there is enough agency in a game of Cascadia that a decent player should be able to score well and feel a sense of accomplishment.

Design Balance – It’s worth mentioning that Cascadia has some nice design elements that help balance the pros and cons when selecting tiles and animal tokens.

For example, those Keystone Habitats seem like a ‘must take’ every time they appear. This is because they are the only way to acquire those Nature Tokens, which are valuable in helping to keep your tile\token selections open. However, Keystone Tiles are also limiting as they only offer up a single habitat and a home for a single animal type. This is in contrast to other tiles which will always feature 2 habitats (helping to earn more points for connected habitats and a greater chance to compete for Habitat 'bonus points'). Other tiles will also allow several animals to be housed there, thus opening up a player's options as the play unfolds.

For these reasons, Keystone Habitat Tiles give with one hand and restrict with the other. Kudos to the designers for introducing this simple but important element.

A Theme That Isn’t Lip Service – It’s also worth mentioning how great it is to see a theme being used and integrated into the design rather than just being slapped on top of the box cover. Cascadia is more than an excuse for the artwork - including elements such as Habitat Corridors, biodiversity, Keystone Habitats and 5 gorgeous species from the area.

I'm not saying you are living the theme here...you won't feel like a hiker with every turn, but the importance of nature and the beauty of it does come through.

Creation Over Destruction – Cascadia is one of those games that promotes positivity in the form of being able to look down at your play area at game end and appreciate what you’ve built, rather than what you have lost or had taken away by someone else. It might be a forest corridor, a run of salmon weaving between the mountains or a group of Elk in the northwest. These and many other visual elements are just some of the things I have been able to appreciate at the end of a game regardless of whether I won the game or came a distant 3rd.

The game feels positive as an experience and I think that is appealing to many that play it.

Visuals – Cascadia is also one of those games that many an owner will love to have in their collection or sitting proudly on a display shelf due to how great it looks. Beth Sobel has created a box cover that is eye-catching and the in-game artwork is vivid and diverse enough that each element stands out and makes for a pleasant tabletop. How far we have come since the late ’90s and early 2000s. We live in a time now where a great game considers every aspect of game production.

Variability – The final point of note is the variability that is built into the design. I love that there are 4 different scoring cards for each of the animals. Quite often there will be a commonality in each of the cards, which relates to that animal but by having the subtle changes and having to adapt your play style to what is in play each game…it adds to the overall puzzle that I am engaging with.

Image Courtesy of MarcoValada

The Solo Game and Some Added Value (Challenges)

The industry has now, more or less, adopted 'solo modes' as a standard feature in most designs. I for one like these additions, but it is still true that some are no more than afterthoughts, whilst others are compelling.

Cascadia (much like Calico ) falls somewhere in the middle. The solo game plays out in much the same way as the 2-player experience (in relation to the number of tiles used). The actions taken by the player are the same as in the normal game but the simulation of playing against an opponent is created through the addition of an end of turn phase.

After a player has taken their turn, they must discard the Habitat Tile and Wildlife Token that are to the far-right of the selection row. This means the player knows what will be lost to them when they make their selection and they have to weigh up how important a loss those elements will be in comparison to what they select. In effect the solo mode offers up a new decision space that as players we don't tend to focus on as much in the multiplayer format (we tend to take the best selection we can at the time and see what is on offer next time, as many things may change). Two new tiles and tokens are then placed to the left of the selection row to return the offering to 4 sets of options.

The scoring is also slightly different for Habitats (animals are still determined by the Scoring Cards in play). A point is still earned for every tile in the player's largest Habitat Corridor of each terrain, but 2 bonus points are earned if a habitat contains 7 or more connected tiles, rewarding a player that shoots for a couple of big regions.

For me, the solo experience of Cascadia is slightly more rewarding and engaging than the one offered up by Calico as I don't find it as mentally taxing or as limiting (but that is also due to the nature of the two games as well). I manage to finish a solo game of Cascadia in 16-22 minutes. That's a fairly good 'time to decision ratio' and that's what I look for in a solo game.

But solo modes that are a 'beat your own score' affair never live long in the memory. Thankfully...

The Challenges – I think these are a great inclusion (and appear to be a studio feature as Calico has them as well) and I hope more games think of elements like this in the future. In all the game offers up a total of 50 different challenges in 3 different categories.

These act like 'unlocks' that you might see in digital games. They are a way to shoot for even more goals as you play a regular game and some even change the rules or set-up in some way. The rulebook offers 6 different colours to accommodate up to 6 different players (you can record your own progress over time). Each player writes their name against one of the trails and before them lie 50 milestones that can be coloured in. Each time a player completes a challenge, not only do they colour in their icon mark at that challenge in the rulebook but they get to colour in a new milestone on their personal trail.

It really is fun to shoot for these challenges and friends\family can enjoy a fun little competition of seeing who gets out in front as they play Cascadia over and over again. When playing multiplayer games, only the winner of the game gets to earn the reward for that challenge.

I think this inclusion adds great value (for purchasing the game) and re-playability.

In brief...

Scenario Challenges – These are a collection of 15 objectives that outline the exact Scoring Cards to use for each of the animals. In addition a challenge might set a series of goals such as a total score that must be reached or how many points must be earned from certain animals of habitats.

These can be played in multiplayer or solo mode.

Normal Challenges – This is a set of 25 challenges. The winner of a game can highlight any one challenge they completed. These challenges include things like – ‘Score 110 points’, ‘Have no Foxes’ or ‘Score 30 points from a single form of Wildlife’.

These challenges are for multiplayer games only.

Rule Restrictions – Another 10 challenges can be found here. They come in the form of restricting the play in some way and as such the players should agree to which one they are playing with before the game gets underway.

Examples include - 'Habitat Corridors must be at least 5 tiles in size to score' and 'It takes 2 Nature Tokens in order to take a Nature Token Action'.

In summary I think the solo mode, when coupled with the Challenges, takes the puzzle aspect of Cascadia and cranks it up to 11! It really makes me weigh up the scoring potential of one move over another and after 10 or so plays I was starting to see decisions in terms of, 'This play is worth 2.5 points per animal whereas that play is worth 3 points per animal'). I don't mind this at all but it does take your brain to another level.

Image Courtesy of henk.rolleman

I still find it quite Zen-like in truth and the quick and light set-up is something I appreciate compared to some games out their (Roll Player , Mage Knight , Gloomhaven etc).

The Final Word

I discovered Cascadia in November of 2021, at a small but lovely (and rare for that year) convention and it was a breath of fresh air. It was the perfect escape between games with deeper rulesets and mental requirements. The close scoring in each of my three games over that weekend helped to elevate each of the small but meaningful decisions during the play. I knew instantly that this was a game that Annie would love because we don’t always have the energy levels to engage in something deeper, especially mid-week.

That is, I think, a key point to remember about any game. We tend to judge and evaluate games against one another when we think about 'the best' or 'our favourite' games BUT...not every game can be a Great Western Trail , A Feast for Odin or a TI4 . Not every game needs to be that demanding (both in time and mental energy).

For me, Cascadia is a great example of lighter game design that knows what it wants to be and executes that with precision. There is no bloat here but I can see some people dismissing a game such as this as being ‘by the numbers’, with tried and true mechanisms such as tile placement and set collection. For me though...Cascadia comes together in a nice package.

The challenges (multi-player or solo) to shoot for (think unlocks in a digital game) are also very engaging for those that like such things and they offer an owner even greater re-playability over time. I am currently enjoying the solo challenges through the 1-Player Guild here on BGG and it is a feature of each month for me.

Sure, Cascadia is a puzzle to be solved with each play, but the random pairing of tiles coupled with the varied scoring cards for the animals makes for a unique puzzle each time. That will appeal to some people more than others but I think a game like this fits into a similar design space as Azul - there is just more variability on offer here and the theme is a bit more tangible. Where Azul requires multiple titles to offer re-playability, Cascadia does it within the one box. That's no mean feat.

In closing, I think Cascadia is a winner and I’m very happy to have had a chance to play it and discover it for myself. I’ll admit that amid all the early positive buzz many months ago, I was somewhat dismissive. From first glances I thought I didn’t need another game of this thematic backdrop and nature (puzzle-y) as I had Ecosystem . I was also sceptical to a degree based on Calico . Calico is quite a good game but I don’t love the endgame portion, when the players are often 'shooting' for a very specific tile and the other players are quite aware of that fact as well.

Thankfully Cascadia and Calico are quite different in feel and execution. That said, I still have room for both in my collection and Calico has grown on me again in recent times. As I approach 40-50 plays of Cascadia I am still enjoying what it has to offer.

So what’s left to say?

Oh yes, who is Cascadia likely to appeal to most? Naturally it is the perfect game for families and fans of lighter games and puzzles, simply because of the simple turn structure. The game is also very easy to learn and get to the table. Playing well of course on a consistent basis is another matter and therein lies the longer-term challenge. I played Cascadia with several gamers at that November convention (and several since) that prefer the heavier weight of game and they still had a good time with it. I think Cascadia has a charm that allows it to appeal to a wide variety of gamer types and it could well be an evergreen title moving forward if print-runs can be maintained and supply is widely available.

For that reason alone I now have Flatout Games on my radar as a publisher that gets the small details right and I look forward to seeing and playing what they come up with next (which will be Verdant ).

‘Til next we meet, may your Elks run free and the Salmon survive their run!

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Calico

Verdant

EDIT - Added SdJ Award for 2022

Destination Geek

@Neil Thomson

Naturally it is the perfect game for families and fans of lighter games and puzzles, simply because of the simple turn structure. The game is also very easy to learn and get to the table. Playing well of course on a consistent basis is another matter and therein lies the longer-term challenge.

This is exactly what appealed to me most and is why it was a great addition to my (very small) collection of games. I play mostly solo games but am finding that I need a couple games that can be scaled down to play with my non-gamer family, and a couple games that can be used to play quickly at game night when we need a "filler" game. This fills both those needs, all while still providing a fun solo mode that can make it easy to get out for a weeknight game. I am working through the Challenges now and finding them a lot of fun - and quite a challenge!

Thanks for taking the time to write a great review!

Cindy K

@DesertRambler

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Thanks for taking the time to write a great review!

Thanks for reading Cindy.

Thank you so much for the thoughtful and thorough review!

We really appreciate the kind words! At Flatout Games we're very focused on providing the best possible value in all of our games - great games with great production value don't need to cost a lot, and keeping the prices of our games as low as we can means that many people can enjoy them. It's always a tricky balance of trying to make a game that will stand out, but that is also economical to produce.

Our CoLab team poured so many hours of care into Cascadia, and it feels great to see many people enjoying the game as much as we do!

Thank you again for the thoughts and we can't wait for you to try Verdant!

Shawn Stankewich

@stankewich

Thank you so much for the thoughtful and thorough review!

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Thank you again for the thoughts and we can't wait for you to try Verdant!

Hiya - Yeah I hadn't quite tuned onto Flatout Games until after Verdant's KS project had ended. So I will be looking for it at retail and look forward to seeing what you have cooked up next.

Quote:

The one miss-step that was made is the lack of a clear defining border on some of the terrain edges, with mountains and rivers perhaps being the worst culprits.

Exactly. It's not enough to reduce the game to a "9" rating for us, but it annoys my wife every time we play. Since I don't have a problem, I rather appreciate the ambiguity. If it weren't for that graphic slip I might never win.

Great review, as always

EDIT - Cascadia wins the Spiel des Jahres for 2022 - Added this credit.

Happy to have reviewed it in timely fashion.

"From first glances I thought I didn’t need another game of this thematic backdrop and nature (puzzle-y) as I had Ecosystem."

I'm in a similar position where I have Ecosystem and it is one of my favourite games but I think I'll go haead and buy this game. At least it seems as though it has enough going for it to warrant a spot in my collection

===RESEÑA===

Título: Picturesque Pandering Produces Pleasing Puzzles

I can't remember whether I saw The King's Speech before it was nominated for the "Best Picture" Academy Award or after, but I do remember my wife and I rolling our eyes through much of it while we sat in the theater. It felt like it was by-the-numbers Oscar bait, a movie made specifically to win awards. (And sure enough, it won.) Yet while part of me was cynical about the whole thing, I could also see that the movie was competently done and probably worthy of its accolades, even if it wasn't quite to my taste.

It was no surprise to see that Cascadia was nominated for the Spiel des Jahres in 2022. It seems like it was similarly made to be lauded, already earning the 2022 Golden Geek for Light Game of the Year. It, too, is competently done: beautiful art, simple rules, engaging puzzle. And while I might be tempted to roll my eyes at it, to see it as pandering in some way, I just can't bring myself to full cynicism. It's too charming for that. And, unlike The King's Speech, it has managed to win me over.

Cascadia set up for one player. This game was attempting the fifth scenario in the rules booklet.

Cascadia is a game of placing habitat tiles in your environment and populating those tiles with animals. The objective is to place animals in formations, determined by the scoring cards, which can vary each game. Players begin with a starting tile of three conjoined hexagons, and each turn they will draft from a common pool one set of one animal and one tile, placing each in their environment. Each hexagonal tile can accommodate only certain kinds of animals, and players are rewarded not only for putting animals in the correct formations but also for building large areas of each of the five different types of habitat terrain. At the end of the game, players score their animal formations, the largest group of each type of terrain in their area, and bonuses if their largest group is larger than their opponents'. The player with the most points wins.

Cascadia has a very simple core, and there's not a lot that you might call "innovative" about the game. Some early reviewers thought the game would get lost--isn't Cascadia just the latest in a sea of beautiful, abstract, solitary puzzle games?

I understand these thoughts, and I can sympathize. But after playing more than twenty times, I feel confident in thinking there are some hidden depths here behind the pretty face.

The four grizzly bear scoring cards. Each is a variation on a theme, but they do change up the game somewhat, especially by determining which gambles might be worth it and which are probably not.

What elevates Cascadia beyond its peers, in my estimation, is the packet drafting. Each turn, you have to choose a pair of one terrain tile and one animal, and you can't mix and match. The pairs come out randomly, refilling the draft choices once a player chooses a pair, and you're stuck with what you get. It doesn't matter that the tile you want isn't paired with the animal you want. You have to choose a pair, and you make do with what you get.

This is the main tension of the game, and the thing that keeps me interested in it. To be sure, the rest of the puzzle is well done--the goals are well defined, and it's easy to see how animals are scoring, even across the table, and you always have at least three options of where you might place an animal when you're drafting. But were it not for the packet drafting, I'm not sure I'd be as enamored as I am of Cascadia.

I've said many times before that one of my chief values in the games I play is trade-offs. I want to know that I can't do everything, and I want to see that once I decide on one course of action, another one is closed to me. Cascadia is a tactical game of getting things and making do. You will rarely get the ideal combination, so you have to evaluate your choices and do the best with what's on offer.

This sounds like it could be lucky, and it can be. I've had games where the animals I'm looking for just don't seem to turn up. But Cascadia introduces a way to control luck: nature tokens. Around one third of the hexagonal habitat tiles are keystone tiles. While most tiles feature two terrains and an option of multiple kinds of wildlife that can live there, keystone tiles limit placement options: they have a single terrain and can hold a single kind of animal. However, if you play a matching animal on a keystone tile, you are rewarded with a nature token, which allows you to break the drafting rules by either grabbing an animal and terrain tile of your choice or by removing and redrawing animal tokens to have a better shot at the animals you need.

By placing this fox on its keystone tile, I get a nature token that will help me later on.

I like what the keystone tiles/nature tokens add to the game because they introduce another interesting wrinkle to the game: is it worth constraining your choice with the keystone tiles (both in terrain and animal) to give you greater freedom later on?

The scoring cards are the one aspect of the game I'm a little less convinced about. While there are four cards for each of the game's five animals, they are all minor variations on a theme and aren't all that exciting in practice. Gains are small and incremental, and there aren't ways to take big risks to score big points (or fail). Most of the cards score you around the same number of points for each placement, removing some of the meaningfulness from your choices. That being said, some of the cards are more interesting, requiring more gambles to score. The C bear card, for example, scores groups of bears, whether 1, 2, or 3. But the A card scores only pairs of bears, so if you don't manage to get your bears together (or if you put too many bears in close quarters), you are out of luck. And the B card only scores for bear trios, which makes the risks more meaningful. I do like that some of the cards require risk, but this can be frustrating if animals simply don't come out of the bag. This can also make competition fierce for animals that aren't coming out in the quantities players want. (They're all equally represented in the draw bag, but as anyone who plays games knows, there's a difference between probabilities and certainties, and there are more animals in the bag than will come out in any given game.) While luck can be frustrating here, the game is simple, pleasant, and low-stakes enough that this isn't usually a bother (although it does play into who I think the game is best for).

My environment mid-game. In this scenario, I'm trying to maximize the score of three foxes while also scoring at least 85 points.

As I said, I think Cascadia is very good. I've played more than twenty times, and I waffle between an 8 and a 9 rating. The one negative I have to say about it is that it is a very solitary game. Players are building up their own areas with little opportunity to disrupt what other players are doing. I suppose it's possible to hate draft a pair just to spite another player, but with only twenty turns in the game, players are more likely to get in each other's way incidentally rather than intentionally, as when too few of an animal come out.

For this reason, my favorite way to play Cascadia is solitaire. Aside from the satisfying puzzle that the game presents on its own, the rulebook offers 15 scenarios for players to try to fulfill--trick shots of scoring cards and meeting certain parameters. These scenarios are well designed and are tough to pull off without some planning, which makes it satisfying to succeed. Most of my plays have been solitaire.

That being said, I think Cascadia is ideally suited for the audience the Spiel des Jahres targets: families. While young children may have trouble with the planning aspect of placing animals in specific formations, the game includes a family variant and an intermediate variant that take the place of these scoring cards, making the game adaptable to all ages. Further, as I said above, the game is charming and inviting: it's the kind of game that looks beautiful and is enticing on the table. While Cascadia would usually not be my first choice to play at game night (and, indeed, I don't put it in my game night bag unless it's specifically requested), it is a great choice for a mixed group of people of different gaming abilities, or for when people are more interested in conversation than a centerpiece game, or for groups who like games of low interaction. There's enough to keep players looking at each other's areas (the scoring bonuses at the end are nothing to sneeze at), but not so much interaction to keep tension high. The main tension is in contending with the game's puzzle.

The game comes with fifteen scenarios, increasing in challenge, that are my favorite way to play solitaire.

I stopped playing Bohnanza with my family years ago because rather than it being a game of shrewd trading, my sisters play practically cooperatively. "Oh, you want this wax bean? Here, let me donate it to you!" At a certain point, it becomes less a game than an activity. I haven't played Cascadia with my sisters yet, but I suspect they will enjoy it quite a bit. While it's not as prone to cooperative play as their version of Bohnanza is, it's still a pleasant way to pass the time with people you love, while looking at nice artwork and conversing about this or that. And there's enough there that I can get absorbed in my own puzzle without drowning in the sea of their positive vibes.

Also, worth noting: as I was preparing this review, someone at work suggested Cascadia for our lunch game, and another person responded, "That one is so fun!" Its utility as a solo game and lunch game is why my copy of Cascadia usually remains in the office. So, again, for the family crowd--or the oft-overlapping casual gamer crowd--Cascadia speaks to people in a language they love to hear.

My environment at the end of the game.

The components for Cascadia are, as you would expect of a game I call "picturesque," very well done. But I chose "picturesque" intentionally, and not just because it has a P. Cascadia was originally funded on Kickstarter, but to me, it doesn't have that cloying, Kickstarter look--with lots of stretch goals, unnecessary bling, and art that looks like it's made more for marketing materials than for the table. The illustrations on the tiles and tokens here are well done, but they are understated. They are approachable. They are beautiful if you want to look at them; they easily blend into the background if you don't. But perhaps most important of all, they are functional. It's very easy to read the game state and the draft row from any angle, even across a table. The animal tokens, once placed on a tile, completely cover the icon of what can go on that space while also leaving the terrain types in view. I contrast this with another game I played recently that features animals--Ark Nova . Ark Nova has more information that needs to be accessible to players, yet in most four-player games, one player will always be looking at text-heavy cards upside-down. In Cascadia, there's no ill-favored place to sit, and this goes a long way toward making the game approachable. The scoring cards are tarot-sized and have clear icons that are easy to reference. The game includes a draw bag for the animal tokens, which is helpful; I added a second draw bag for the tiles, which speeds the game considerably. Again, the components here are excellent, and this fits well with its $39.99 MSRP.

Cascadia comes with a handy score sheet. (And, as you can see in the last column, I just made the 85-point goal for the scenario. Whew!)

So while Cascadia seems like it's pining (!) for awards, I won't begrudge it if it wins because it is a nice-looking, well-designed game, well suited for both solitaire and casual play, and the central mechanical hook of packet drafting is an interesting one. As I said, my preferred way to play is using the scenarios in the rulebook for single-player games, but I'm also not upset when someone else suggests to play it, and I will sometimes suggest it in the right company--it is a great choice for a casual game. This may seem like I'm damning the game with faint praise, but the situations where I find myself reaching for Cascadia keep increasing, and the people I've played it with keep requesting it, so it seems to fit an award targeting mass appeal. I, at least, plan to hold on to my copy because it's probably the best of the solitary take-and-make genre that you're likely to find, and its charms only grow the more I play it.

This review originally appeared on my BGG blog, Shelf Wear.

===RESEÑA===

Título: German Review at BoardGameMonkeys.com (Deutsche Rezension)

Diese Rezension wurde ursprünglich unter https://www.boardgamemonkeys.com/2022/06/cascadia.html veröffentlicht (mit Bildern).

Besucht uns auf www.BoardgameMonkeys.com für weitere Rezensionen und folgt uns auf Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/realBoardgameMonkeys/) oder Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/boardgamemonkeys/).

Begib dich auf eine Reise in den pazifischen Nordwesten, in die Region Cascadia, welche sich vom Westen Nord-Amerikas bis hin in die Provinzen von Kanada erstreckt. Kannst du die Ahornwälder riechen, den frischen Wind der Berge spüren oder in freier Wildbahn vielleicht einen Bären sichten? Tauche ein in die wunderschöne Natur von Cascadia, einem Spiel von AEG.

Spielidee

In Cascadia formen die Spieler eine abwechslungsreiche Natur & besiedeln diese mit passenden Wildtieren. In Form von unterschiedlichsten Landschaftsplättchen „puzzeln“ wir eine Umwelt, um diese dann mit den dazugehörigen Tieren zu beleben. Ein Plättchenlege-Spiel mit Drafting-Elementen und Puzzelgefühl.

Spielablauf

Nach dem Aufbau wird das Spiel im Uhrzeigersinn, beginnend mit dem Startspieler gespielt. Der aktive Spieler sucht sich aus der Auslage in der Mitte ein Landschaftsplättchen sowie den darunter liegenden Wildtiertoken aus.

Anschließend legt der/die Spieler\*in das gewählte Landschaftsplättchen an seine bereits ausliegende Landschaft bzw. sein persönliches Startplättchen an. Hierbei ist man völlig frei in der Platzierung des Plättchens, lediglich muss es an mindestens ein anderes Plättchen einer bereits ausliegenden Landschaft angrenzen. Natürlich empfiehlt sich beim Auslegen der Landschaft eine gewisse Vorgehensweise, da am Spielende Punkte für die größte Landschaft jeder Art vergeben werden. Insofern versuchen die Spieler\*innen zusammenhängende Landschaften gleichen Typs zu formen. Fünf unterschiedliche Landschaftsarten stehen uns hierbei zur Verfügung.

Nach dem Legen des Landschaftsplättchens kann der Spieler nun den Wildtiertoken, welchen er/sie zusammen mit dem Landschaftsplättchen aus der Mitte genommen hat, in seiner Natur platzieren. Dazu kann er ein Landschaftsplättchen frei wählen, auf welchem die jeweilige Tierart abgebildet ist. Auch hier versuchen die Spieler\*innen bestimmte Vorgaben zu erfüllen, welche in Form von Aufgabenkarten offen für alle ersichtlich in der Mitte ausliegen und somit ebenfalls Punkte einbringen.

So möchten z.B. Bären gern Paarweise nebeneinanderliegen, Wildadler hingegen sind eher Einzelgänger und möchten somit gern das einzige Tier ihrer Art im Umkreis bleiben um Punkte zu generieren.

Im Anschluss wird das entfernte Landschaftsplättchen sowie der Tiertoken zufällig wieder aufgefüllt & der/die nächste Spieler\*in ist an der Reihe.

Das Spiel endet, sobald kein Landschaftsplättchen am Ende eines Spielerzuges mehr nachgelegt werden kann.

Nun werden Punkte verteilt für:

die Erfüllung der jeweiligen Tierauftragskarten

Die größten Naturgebiete der jeweiligen Art des Spieler/der Spielerin

Bonuspunkte für den Spieler\*in mit dem größten Naturgebiet der jeweiligen Art

Für ungenutzte Naturtokens (Tannenzapfen), welche im Spiel eingesetzt werden können, um bei der Auslage flexibel wählen zu können

Der Spieler/ die Spielerin mit den meisten Punkten gewinnt natürlich!

Fazit

Zunächst sei gesagt, dass Cascadia wunderschön anzuschauen ist! Das Artwork insbesondere der Auftragskarten ist fantastisch, ebenso wie der Rest des Spielmaterials.

Thematisch hatte mich das Spiel direkt erreicht, da ich das Puzzeln der Landschaft sowie das zuordnen der Tiere in ihre Lebensräume einfach schön umgesetzt und spannend finde. Die Regeln sind simpel und schnell erklärt und einem schnellen Start steht somit nichts im Wege, somit lässt es sich zügig auf den Tisch bringen und flott runterspielen. Der Spielfluss ist angenehm und lange Wartezeiten bis zum nächsten Zug bleiben nahezu aus.

Die allgemeinen Auftragskarten sind gut ausbalanciert und auch thematisch fügen diese sich sehr gut ins Spiel ein. So möchten z.b. die Elche in einer Herde leben, der Fuchs ist gern von unterschiedlichen Tierarten umgeben und die Fische schwimmen gern in einer fortlaufenden Reihe. Das Anordnen der Tiere in der eigenen Landschaft ist somit herausfordernd und macht einfach Laune.

Auch das Formen der Landschaft aus den unterschiedlichsten Plättchen bringt ein tolles Puzzle-Element in dieses Spiel, zudem man auch stets die Landschaften der Mitspieler im Auge behalten sollte bezüglich der Größe ihrer Landschaftstypen.

Zusätzlich lässt sich der Schwierigkeitsgrad unterschiedlich gestalten bzw. steigern, in Form von weiteren Auftragskarten. Dadurch sind weitere Herausforderungen und Abwechslung bezogen auf die Anordnung der Tiere geboten.

Die Auswertung am Enden des Spiels ist spannend und bis zum Schluss kann mitgefiebert werden.

Bei uns kam Cascadia bereits häufig auf den Tisch in unterschiedlichsten Runden und wird dies sicherlich auch weiterhin tun. Ob mit Vielspielern, Gelegenheitsspielern aber auch Nichtspielern, waren es jedesmal tolle Spielrunden & jede/r Mitspieler\*in hatte seine Freude an Cascadia. Da Cascadia sehr zugänglich und simpel ist, lässt es sich auch mit sämtlichen Altersklassen gut spielen und eignet sich hervorragend als Familienspiel.

Hiermit spreche ich eine klare Empfehlung für Cascadia aus! Ein Spiel welches aus meiner Sicht in die Spielesammlung gehört. Auch die Nominierung zum Spiel des Jahres 2022 (in der Ausgabe von Kosmos) unterstreicht meinen äußerst positiven Eindruck zu diesem rundum gelungenen Plättchenlege-Spiel.

Insbesondere Fans von Calico, Llama Land und anderen „Puzzle“-Spielen dürften mit Cascadia ihre pure Freude haben.

Ich jedenfalls drücke fest die Daumen für die Verleihung zum Spiel des Jahres 2022 und wünsche diesem Titel den Sieg.

===RESEÑA===

Título: The Ratatouille of board games

Some games just have that certain je ne sais quois, you can’t necessarily put your finger to it but there’s just something that really brings it all together. In a way I somehow feel I shouldn’t love this game as much as I do, that no single element in its premise is worthy of that much praise. But in effect Cascadia is such a wonderful little gem, so unpretentious in its nature and so deceptively inconspicuous. This is at its heart a pattern building game, but with such a wonderful package built around it that you constantly feel drawn to it - it’s such a great spend of one hour of your time. It’s a great play with 2 players only, and a true example of board gaming bliss: it’s fuzzy enough that you don’t feel guilty for not calculating all the different play possibilities, but not too much that you don’t feel like it’s pointless; the drawing system is so fresh allowing you to pick from a pre-drawn set of 4 pairs; the variable scoring cards and the multiple ways at your disposal to add up points; the great art and theme and how it all blends together so nicely, how positive it always is and how it truly makes you feel ok for not having won because you truly still had a really great game building up your points and keeping busy at it. And yet despite all this, I still feel like I really can’t put to words how nicely done Cascadia is, how perfectly balanced, immersive, fresh and positive it feels, with all its elements just finely and seamlessly connected. This is truly a wonderful gem of a game - like the unpretentious peasant dish in the Ratatouille animation movie, which brings the food critique to tears, this is a superbly executed dish which is so much greater than the sum of its perfectly balanced parts and invoques all the blissful illusive feelings that a superior board game experience should.

It's a great game and a common thought for the game is "why do I like this game so much". I had the same thought myself.

On a side note in both the pictures you posted I noticed both players elk groups are oriented in a straight line as depicted on the scoring card, just wanted to drop a friendly reminder that that isn't required. It can be a line in any orientation (so either the way you have it or a diagonal line).

Ha! Thanks for that, I don't think we were aware of that!!!

Hi Alec,

not entirely sure I fully understand your post, hence some clarification requested here.

With this particular Elk scoring card (A), a straight line is required. They can be horizontal or diagonal from a viewer's perspective as long as it's 1 line. A line with a kink in it, would then become 2 straight lines.

In picture 1 it would be 2 x 3 scored.

Is this what you were also saying? Or was it different.

greetings,

J.

If you look at pictures 1 and 2 it seems Pedro and his opponent thought that you could only place elk in a horizontal line. I figured this because the elk/environment placement is sub-optimal. Both players could have kept their mountains connected and scored their elk if they knew they could go diagonal.

You are correct a line with a kink in it would be seperate scoring lines, also correct that picture one would be 2x3.

===RESEÑA===

Título: [German] Cascadia Review

Weitere Inhalte gibt es auf meinem Blog:

https://spieltroll.de

Ich habe ja in dem ein oder anderen Monatsbericht schon davon geschrieben, wie fantastisch Cascadia bei uns ankam. Folgerichtig kommt hier nun die Review zum Spiel und schon von vornherein prangt auf der Schachtelabbildung mein Orden für die ganz fantastischen Spiele, die es da draußen so gibt und die sich für euch meiner Meinung nach lohnen werden, wenn ihr sie ausprobiert und einen ähnlichen Geschmack besitzt, was Spiele angeht. Bei Cascadia gehe ich sogar soweit zu sagen, dass wir hier wohl einen der heißesten Anwärter auf einen Nominierten zum Spiel des Jahres vorliegen haben. Über Cascadia geistern bestimmt schon superviele Reviews und Rezensionen in der Welt herum, denn die englische Version geistert nun schon eine ganze Weile herum und so ziemlich jede\*r dürfte sich über die Vergleiche zwischen Cascadia und Calico abgearbeitet haben. In meinem Fazit werde ich auch kurz darauf eingehen, aber außer das beide Spiele von Beth Sobel illustriert, von Flatout Games stammen und beide mit einem C beginnen, haben sie gar nicht mal soviel gemeinsam. Eigentlich sind sie sogar zwei ziemlich verschiedene Spiele. Egal. Hereinspaziert Freunde des gepflegten Legespiels. Hier kommt ihr voll auf eure Kosten!

Worum geht es?

Rein thematisch bewegen wir uns in Kaskadien, einem Gebiet im Nordwesten des nordamerikanischen Kontinents. Kaskadien erstreckt sich von Kanada bis hin nach Washington und Oregon in die USA und bezeichnet das Gebiet hinter der Kaskadenkette, einem Vulkangebirge, dass sich entlang der Küstenlinie bewegt. Die Region zeichnet sich durch eine reiche Flora und Fauna aus und genau um die Fauna geht es in diesem Spiel. Nein, natürlich nicht, die Spieler\*innen müssen in Cascadia nur kleine Tierchips auf die richtigen Gebietsplättchen legen, um jede Menge Punkte zu verdienen. Das Thema ist wie so häufig total egal. Wer am Ende sowohl die Tierplättchen nach ihren Vorgaben am besten platziert hat, als auch die größten Gebiete aus den Gebietsplättchen gebaut hat, wird gewinnen.

Wie läuft das ab?

Wie sich das für ein potentielles Spiel des Jahres gehört, sind sowohl der Spielaufbau, als auch die Spieldurchführung recht simpel und durchaus schnell erledigt. Cascadia besteht nur aus recht wenig verschiedenen Spielmaterialien. Zum einen wären da die schon erwähnten Gebietsplättchen in sechseckform. Fünf verschiedene Gebiete (Gebirge, Wald, Fluss, Prärie und Feuchtgebiet) werden auf ihnen dargestellt, viele zeigen auch mehrere Gebiete. Insgesamt gibt es 85 dieser Gebietsplättchen und neben der Geländeform sind auch immer noch ein bis drei der fünf Tiersorten (Rotfüchse, Grizzly Bären, Königslachse, Wapiti Hirsche und Rotschwanzbussarde) auf ihnen abgebildet. Die Plättchen die nur ein Gebiet zeigen besitzen zusätzlich noch ein Zapfensymbol. Als Startgebiete gibt es noch fünf unterschiedliche aus drei Plättchen zusammenhängende Gebiete.

Neben den Gebietsplättchen existieren auch noch 100 hölzerne Tierchips für die fünf Tierarten des Spiels. Jedes Tier kommt so auf zwanzig Chips, die alle in den mitgelieferten grünen Stoffbeutel durchgemischt werden. Ansonsten gibt es nur noch 25 Zapfenplättchen, die als Vorrat bereitgelegt werden, einen Wertungsblock für das Spielende, sowie für jede Tiersorte vier Wertungskarten plus eine Wertungskarte für ein vereinfachtes Spiel. Mehr Material braucht es für Cascadia gar nicht.

Der Spielaufbau hängt in punkto der Gebietsplättchen von der Spieler\*innenanzahl ab. Insgesamt kann mit bis zu vier Personen gespielt werden und für das Spiel werden pro Spieler\*in 20 Plättchen benötigt und am Ende noch drei weitere hinzugefügt. Das heisst, das die anderen zufällig entfernt werden und der Rest wird verdeckt gemischt und in Stapeln bereitgelegt. Die Spieler\*innen einigen sich auf die benutzen Wertungskarten oder wählen sie zufällig aus. Wichtig ist nur, das pro Tierart eine Karte mitspielt. Für die Erstpartie mit den normalen Regeln wird der Kartensatz A empfohlen. Für ein Spiel mit vereinfachter Wertung werden die einzelnen Tierkarten aber gar nicht benötigt. Für diesen Zweck liegt eine weitere einzelne Wertungskarte bereit. Nachdem klar ist, wie dies Spieler\*innen am Ende des Spiels werten, legen alle ihre Startplättchen vor sich aus und eine Auslage aus vier Paaren Gebiets- und Tierplättchen wird gebildet. Es muss immer klar erkennbar sein, welches Tierplättchen zu welchem Gebietsplättchen gehört. Dann kann losgespielt werden.

Ein Spielzug ist denkbar einfach und besteht aus vier simplen Schritten. Zunächst wird die Auslage auf Überbevölkerung überprüft und das bedeutet nichts anderes als das geschaut wird, ob drei oder vier gleiche Tierplättchen ausliegen. Liegen vier gleiche Tiere in der Auslage müssen sie ausgetauscht werden und es werden vier neue Tiere aus dem Beutel gezogen. Bei drei gleichen Tieren darf getauscht werden. Es besteht aber kein Zwang. Dann muss eine Kombination aus beiden Plättchen genommen werden. Es dürfen immer nur zusammengehörige Paare gewählt werden. Nur über einen eingesetzten Zapfen ist es möglich eine Kombination aus nicht zusammengehörenden Plättchen zu wählen. Außerdem ist es für den Einsatz eines Zapfens auch möglich beliebig viele Tierplättchen durch neue austauschen zu lassen. Anschließend werden beide Plättchen in den Spielbereich eingebaut. Gebietsplättchen können immer irgendwo angelegt werden. Es muss nicht passend Gebiet an gleiches Gebiet gelegt werden, je größer die Gebiete einer Gebietssorte, desto besser aber für die Wertung.

Die Tierplättchen dürfen aber immer nur auf Gebietsplättchen gelegt werden, auf denen die Tierart auch abgebildet ist. Sollte das nicht möglich sein, wandert das Plättchen zurück in den Beutel. Wird ein Plättchen mit Zapfensymbol belegt, so erhält der- oder diejenige ein Plättchen aus dem Vorrat und kann dieses später wie beschrieben einsetzen. Danach wird nur noch die Auslage wieder aufgefüllt und der oder die nächste Spieler\*in ist an der Reihe. Das geht solange genauso um den Tisch, bis jeder zwanzig mal eine Plättchenkombination gewählt hat und dann ist das Spiel passender Weise, wenn die Auslage nicht mehr mit Gebietsplättchen aufegefüllt werden kann, zu Ende.

Wie können wir also Punkten? Zunächst gibt es Punkte für die Tierwertungskarten, die uns für jede der fünf Tiersorten verrät, wie gepunktet wird. Gehen wir doch den A-Satz kurz einmal durch. Die Grizzlys wollen Paare bilden ohne das auf Nachbarfeldern weitere Grizzlys rumlungern. Je mehr Paare wir in unserem Gebiet unterbringen können desto mehr Punkte. Wapitis wollen Reihen in unserer Auslage bilden. Ein Tier kann dabei aber immer nur Teil einer Reihe sein. Je nach Länge von ein bis vier Tieren gibt es mehr Punkte. Lachse wollen gern in einer zusammenhängenden Kette in deinem Gebiet verbringen. Je nach Länge von bis zu sieben Tieren gibt es mehr Punkte. Die Bussarde sind Einzelgänger und wollen direkt um sich herum keine weiteren Bussarde. Je mehr Bussarde in unserer Auslage, desto mehr Punkte. Zu guter letzt noch die Füchse, die sehr gesellig sind und gerne soviele verschiedene Tiere wie möglich um sich herum scharen. Auch hier gilt je mehr verschiedene, desto mehr Punkte. Genau aus der Kombination dieser Wertungsbedingungen erzielt das Spiel seine Schwierigkeit. Nach den Tieren sind aber noch die Gebiete dran und hier ist es ganz einfach. Wir erhalten einen Punkt für jedes Teil eines zusammenhängenden Gebiets jeder Sorte. Sollte unser Gebiet dann sogar noch das größte oder zweitgrößte (nicht bei zwei Spielern natürlich) am Tisch sein erhalten wir noch Bonuspunkte. Auch übriggebliebene Zapfen bringen je einen Punkt.

Für Spieler\*innen denen das zu kompliziert ist, gibt es noch eine vereinfachte Wertung, bei der Gruppen gleicher Tierarten einfach Punkte bringen. Auch ein Solomodus ist entahlten, der sehr vielfältige Möglichkeiten bietet und auch für eine Kampagen mit einer Gruppe geeignet ist, die Lust haben das letzte aus Cascadia herauszuholen.

Das Fazit

Cascadia ist in seiner Einfachheit und Eleganz ganz großes Kino und hievt ganz nebenbei eine weitere Ebene in das Legespieleinerlei. Bei Cascadia müssen sich die Spieler\*innen mit einem zweilagigen Legespiel auseinandersetzen. Es reicht nicht nur Plättchen zu legen, sondern auf diese auch noch Tierplättchen obendarauf. Während die unteren das Fundament durch eine im Prinzip simple Mehrheitenmechanik am Schluss bilden, kommt durch die Tiere mit ihren je nach Partie speziellen Punktevorgaben, der nötige Tiefgang in das Spiel. beides funktioniert nur gut im Einklang, denn die Voraussetzungen für die Tiere wird ja bereits mit den Gebietsplättchen gesetzt. Die Spieler\*innen haben doch recht viel abzuwägen, aber, und hier komme ich nun auf den Vergleich mit Calico zu sprechen, Cascadia schränkt einen mit zunehmender Spieldauer nicht ein, sondern weitet sich immer mehr. Während Calico ein sehr dichtes und immer zuschnürrenderes Erlebnis wird und am Ende kaum noch Möglichkeiten für gute Züge überbleiben, weil alles so eingeschränkt ist, ist Cascadia eher das Spiel der Möglichkeiten. Überall können weitere Geländeplättchen angelegt werden und bieten weitere Möglichkeiten für die Tiere. Wir können einfach immer etwas sinnvolles mit unseren Plättchen machen, wenn wir nicht komplett verpeilt sind und uns selber zu sehr einschränken.

All das macht Cascadia auch für Anfäger\*innen und Wenigspieler\*innen zu einem beherrschbaren, super vonderhandgehenden Spiel, dass für mich in der letzten Zeit Seinesgleichen sucht. Eine ähnlich simple, doch fordernde und elegante Spielerfahrung hatte ich zuletzt gefühlt mit dem ersten Azul. Es macht optisch auf dem Tisch natürlich nicht ganz soviel her, aber spielerisch gefällt es mir tatsächlich noch einen Ticken besser. Auch für etwas mehr Abwechslung ist bei Cascadia gesorgt. Die Kombination der verschiedenen Wertungskarten sorgt für genügend Abwechslung und auch die für die Kampagne angedachten Spielmodi bringen für Fans des Spiels erstmal genug Spielfutter mit.

Leute die Legespiele mögen, werden Cascadia und seine Eleganz lieben. Vielspieler\*innen, die eine gewisse Komplexität erwarten, werden hier ebenfalls mit spannenden Punktemöglichkeiten abgeholt. Auch Gelegenheitsspieler\*innen dürfte Cascadia gefallen, weil es keine hohen Ansprüche an seine Spieler\*innen stellt, aber dennoch gut zu unterhalten weiss. Ich empfehle Cascadia uneingeschränkt und sehe es definitv als einen der drei Nominierungskandidaten für das Spiel des Jahres 2022 an.

Verlag: KOSMOS

Autor(en): Randy Flynn

Illustrator(en): Beth Sobel

Erscheinungsjahr: 2022

Spieleranzahl: 1 – 4 Spieler

Dauer: 30 – 45 Minuten

Weitere Inhalte gibt es auf meinem Blog:

https://spieltroll.de

===RESEÑA===

Título: BoardgamingParent review of Cascadia: Build your own slice of nature

For those that don’t have the background Cascadia is an area in the Pacific North West of North America, it roughly includes the area between the Pacific Coast and the Rocky Mountains. By all accounts it’s a beautiful place and a great backdrop for designer Randy Flynn’s game by the same name.

The first thing I noticed about Cascadia was the gorgeous artwork on the box by Beth Sobel. It immediately got us interested to give this nature themed game a try. Published by Flatout Games and AEG, Cascadia is an easy to learn tile-laying game with plenty to offer beginners and experienced board gamers alike. I’m pleased to say there’s more to this game than a gorgeous box, we’ll explain why in our in-depth review.

Gameplay Experience

I am a huge believer in having a broad range of options on the shelf to cater for different audiences, group sizes and situations. Cascadia is the sort of game you reach for when you want a nice, relaxed vibe. It has that thinky, puzzly type feel about it but without a lot of direct interaction or ability to sabotage other players. What it does isn’t revolutionary, but it’s executed very well.

The gameplay here is simple and my 7-year-old was able to pick up the rules quickly. We didn’t even realise there was a family mode on offer for beginners when we first played, but it’s a nice option to have if you have younger players in your house.

The really satisfying thing about Cascadia is that you can build out your own slice of nature without worrying about interference. I can build my mountain ranges, prairies, and rivers however I want and gain satisfaction when I am able to have them flow in just the right way. No-one is going to steal a tile or sabotage me. This is great if you have kids playing as there is minimal opportunity for arguments over a mean play.

The decisions here are also engaging, you must balance the rewards you get for contiguous habitats with the need to arrange wildlife for maximum reward according to the scoring cards. Sometimes you must sacrifice one to satisfy the other. When my kids can somehow fit the pieces of their nature puzzle together just so, they often admire their handy work pointing out where they have been able to snag maximum points for a certain animal group.

There is plenty on offer here to keep you engaged over multiple plays. Each game can vary depending on the scoring cards you select, and the addition of achievements means each game contributes to a satisfying bigger picture.

The solo mode is also worth mentioning, it plays almost the same as the multiplayer game and in my view is a lot of fun. It doesn’t lose much because player interaction is not a big focus in Cascadia.

That said the lack of player interaction won’t suit some people or some occasions. If you want a game that will generate a lot of banter and competitiveness, I don’t think this is the game to reach for. It’s aiming for a more relaxed vibe.

Components

I know it’s what’s in the box that matters most, but a gorgeous box doesn’t hurt. I think the art on the box by Beth Sobel looks amazing. The quality of the artwork continues in the scoring cards which look stunning.

The habitat tiles and wooden wildlife tokens are nice and chunky. They feel like they will last nicely over time. On the table once your habitat is built out it looks quite impressive to see it coming together. All in all, a great job on the components.

Theme

At its core this is an abstract game, don’t expect a thematic experience. I think what is likely to appeal here is that the subject matter is relatable to most people. The backdrop of a beautiful natural wilderness is unlikely to put anyone off and provides a good excuse for some gorgeous artwork.

It won’t necessarily make sense thematically, the patterns of tiles and animals you are creating are purely abstract. However, if you do want a bit more context to the backdrop, the rule book has some nice background explaining the Cascadia area and wildlife.

Final Thoughts

My wife, daughters and I absolutely love Cascadia, but my son isn't as keen on it as we are. The main reason is because there isn’t much in the way of player interaction or ability to influence opponents in this game. The rest of us don’t have an issue with that.

Overall Cascadia is a fun, gorgeous and accessible tile laying game that’s perfect for when you want a relaxing low-key vibe. There is plenty of variation on offer to keep this game fresh and interesting for a long time. It’s also very family friendly with an easier to learn family variant for younger kids, although the base game is simple to begin with.

Is Cascadia easy to learn? Very easy to learn and includes a simplified family variant, although we didn’t need it to learn how to play.

What will Cascadia teach my kids? This is quite a puzzly game and will help your kids to plan ahead to create patterns that match what’s required. Also, offers some basic maths for end of game scoring. Finally, if they are interested there is some information in the rule book about the area and the wildlife represented in the game which is a nice touch.

What age is appropriate for Cascadia? The age rating is 10+ but my 7-year-old had no trouble picking up this game on the first try. I think 6-year-olds would be fine playing the family variant but might struggle a bit with the more advanced scoring cards.

Does Cascadia have good replay value? Great replay value due to the various play modes and deck of scoring cards that can be varied each game.

Pros:

-Lots of gameplay variations on offer through different animal cards, solo mode, scenarios, and achievements

-Relaxing and addictive gameplay

-Very easy to learn with dedicated family scoring variant to help younger kids learn to play

-Gorgeous artwork from Beth Sobel makes the game look great on the table and the box looks amazing on the shelf!

-Not likely to cause many arguments amongst siblings as the gameplay is relaxed and not much opportunity to sabotage other players.

Cons:

-A little luck involved in the random tile and wildlife token draws but this can be mitigated to an extent with nature tokens

-Not a lot in the way of player interaction which may not suit some people.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Sopophoria (a Space-Biff! review)

Sopophoria

Multiplayer solitaire gets a bad rap. Some folks use the phrase as an insult. But the truth is that sometimes I want to interact with my friends directly and other times I want to sit alongside them, maybe chatting, maybe sharing snacks, while playing in parallel without the pressures of competition.

Cascadia, designed by Randy Flynn and beautifully illustrated by Beth Sobel, is multiplayer solitaire to its core. So much so that its best descriptor is “sleepy.” And not necessarily in a bad way.

Cascadia does many things we’ve seen before. A cynic might point out that it doesn’t have a novel bone in its body. Run down the checklist of modern multiplayer solitaire design and it ticks all the boxes. Hexes arranged to create a landscape, check. Light drafting, check. Discs drawn from a bag, check. Scoring criteria aplenty, check. Individual scores that break one hundred, check. The absence of negative interaction, or even positive interaction, check.

But such a description belies what Cascadia does so well. It’s true that nothing here could be classified as new. The systems themselves are so straightforward that they hardly need explanation. On two occasions, when I sat down to teach Cascadia, my audience waved their hands to illustrate that they got it. Does it need to be explained that you’re drafting a landscape/animal pairing? Not really. Seeing the pairs on the table is enough for anybody who’s been playing games for more than a year or two. The only necessary clarification is that the animals printed on the landscape tiles are possibilities, not presences. They represent where you can place your animals, not where animals are already positioned. Ambiguity dispelled. The same goes for the five scoring categories. Apart from contiguous territories, where do points come from? Well, they’re right there. Each animal has four scoring cards. Sometimes bears travel in clusters of three. Sometimes hawks want to see each other. Salmon make lines across your growing biome, but the precise manner of those lines may differ from play to play.

In other words, Cascadia is built from the ground up to be intuitive. You draft some stuff and then put it together. You think about those scoring cards in a mathy but not too-mathy way. You cuss at your sister-in-law when she takes the bear you wanted. That’s the sum of it. You could probably play this thing sleepwalking.

It’s pleasant, in a drowsy sort of way, like lounging on the couch when the sun butters you through the window, or when a long drive along an empty highway sends you edging toward the rumble strips. Also like those dueling scenarios, its reliability hinges entirely on whether sleep seems desirable right now. One of my plays was perfectly relaxing, blunting the edge of a long and strenuous week, similar to the easing pleasure my mother finds in repetitive tasks like stitching or puzzling. Another play was almost the exact opposite. We came to the table looking to think, to vie, to take in steam. The sluggishness made a poor companion, leaving us listless and constantly inquiring whose turn it was.

Mood can be a strange thing. How’s that for a dullard’s aphorism? But there it is. Cascadia is a river tour boat of a game. Depending on the day leading up to boarding, it can spell a much-needed reprieve for one’s soles or yet another obstacle standing in the way of the next destination. In my case, it proved both. Although I must confess it tended more toward the latter.

Cascadia would be easy to go hard on. To do so, I think, misses its raison d’être. This isn’t an exemplar of the experience I go looking for in a board game, absent as it is of message or competition or even the manner of assessment that forces me to think about problems in fresh ways. Put another way, this is a game designed for someone other than Dan.

That’s all right. As much as I suspect I’ll never play it again, I don’t mind having gotten out of my head for a minute. Whether tranquil or tranquilizer, there’s something to appreciate in the occasional calmative.

This review was originally published at Space-Biff!, so if you like what you see, please head over there for more. https://spacebiff.com/2022/02/03/cascadia/

Also, I suppose I ought to plug my Geeklist of reviews: https://boardgamegeek.com/geeklist/169963/space-biff-histori...

Quote:

...like lounging on the couch when the sun butters you through the window...

"when the sun butters you..." ???

Gawd, I love your way with words!

And oh, BTW... some people find that cussing at the sister-in-law is player interaction!

Barry Miller

@bgm1961

Gawd, I love your way with words!

Thanks, Barry!

Barry Miller

@bgm1961

Quote:

...like lounging on the couch when the sun butters you through the window...

"when the sun butters you..." ???

That means makes you sweat, right?

Bob Bob742

@Bobobob598

Barry Miller

@bgm1961

Quote:

...like lounging on the couch when the sun butters you through the window...

"when the sun butters you..." ???

That means makes you sweat, right?

Yes, but deliciously.

Great review! That was my reaction too, and I can't figure out why. (I play solo but in this case it's pretty much the same.) It should hit all my sweet spots: pretty art, easy rules, map-building, thinly-disguised abstract. I love Azul and Sagrada and Carcassonne and Sprawlopolis and Parks and A Gentle Rain. But within an hour of getting this onto my table I had buyer's remorse and I can't figure out why. It just felt--dull. I'm hoping that it's a mood thing, as you suggest in your review, and that another time it will feel more meditative and less annoying.

Well, for some odd reason this tweak fixed it for me. Instead of the solo rules I played two-handed, trying to get as high a score as possible on both layouts.

I invited my husband to play with me, as he enjoys A Gentle Rain. But he's getting vague in his old age and said the rules on this one were too hard. So I played both sides and found it more engaging than the solo rules.

How well written! Thanks for this review.

While this review confirmed my thoughts that this is not a game for me, i really, really want to be buttered by the sun....

That would be an excuse for buying a game the wife will not have heard before

===RESEÑA===

Título: Playing Cascadia Solo: A Meeple, Myself, and I Review

A preface: I received a review copy of Cascadia from Stone Valley Games. Stone Valley Games is a family-owned game shop located in northern Alabama that specializes in solo-friendly games. Eric from Stone Valley Games has been incredibly clear that I am under no obligation to write a glowing review simply because I received a game from them, and I hope it’s evident that I’ve done my best to create an honest, thorough review.

A second preface: After receiving the review copy of Cascadia, I came to learn that the solo mode was designed by Shawn Stankewich. Shawn was a regular at a board game shop I worked at when I lived in Seattle several years ago, and while I’d bet that he doesn’t remember me, I did interact with him regularly while I was there. I don’t believe this affects my review, but it seems important to note.

~~~

I like some crunch in my games. It’s fun to be stressed out by the delicately interlocking systems of a Lacerda game, or fussing over how to manage my crops correctly in the latest Rosenberg, or getting out the rulebook for Mage Knight and remembering all the little rules I forgot. There will always be space in my collection for interesting, heavy, clever games.

At times, I’m almost more willing to forgive more ambitious games, because it’s easier to get dazzled by the glittery bits of the game. The jutted edges poke out less when the design is more intricate, I suppose. It’s a rare game, then, that seeks to only do a few things and truly does it well. Perhaps simplicity is a virtue that is overlooked and under-loved in the era of multimillion-dollar Kickstarters.

If any of this resonates with you, then join me on a journey. Let me take you to a mythical, faraway land. To a place called...

The Pacific Northwest.

The rules

Cascadia is a tile-laying, pattern-making game where you are placing habitat tiles (that show lakes, forests, fields, and other natural habitats for animals) and animals on those tiles.

The game is, in some ways, breathtakingly simple. On your turn, draft a tile and an animal disc from the four pairs in front of you:

And then place the tile wherever you want and the animal into a qualifying habitat.

You can get little tokens that give you some flexibility in how you draft these items, and then you are looking to place the tiles and the animals with two things in mind:

- Each animal will have a special way that it scores, based on its particular scoring card. (Each animal comes with different scoring cards to increase replayability.) You might have solitary hawks (i.e., they don’t want to be next to other hawks) and you might be making runs of fish (i.e., you want to make a long, uninterrupted string of fish across your tableau).

- Each of your habitat types will score once, based on how big your biggest cluster of each type is.

And, again... that’s it. Each turn, take a habitat tile and an animal token, place them in your tableau, and try to maximize the points from each animal type while ideally grouping together your habitat types for extra scoring.

The solo mode

Frankly, a game this simple is not one that is particularly engaging to me multiplayer. I like a bit more cutthroat-edness in my multiplayer competitive games; I like to feel like people need to worry about what I’m doing, and Cascadia is just not an interactive game. It’s a simple optimization puzzle that has some ancillary moments of “I got this before you” or “I stopped you from getting the token you wanted,” but it’s not my ideal multiplayer game.

But. Give a clever puzzley game like this a simple solo mode mode, and it’ll have some legs for me. I don’t have to care about other people taking their turns, and I can just focus on the beauty of the game and relaxing as I figure out what I want to do on my turn.

And that’s just what the solo mode for Cascadia does. When you’ve taken your tiles, you remove a tile and a token from the drafting options and then replenish the supply; it’s an extraordinarily simple solo mode for an extraordinarily simple game.

The final touch that makes the solo mode really sing for me is the “campaign” mode that the rulebook offers. Cascadia is, solo, just a beat-your-own-score game (because any AI for the game would be more involved than the game itself, almost certainly), and the campaign gives you specific context for what’s a “winning” score in any given game. You are given different configurations of scoring cards for each of the animals, and then you are given a score that you need to beat to win the scenario. This adds just enough grit to make multiple plays feel different and still dangles a nice carrot in front of each game.

It all comes together to make a solo filler game that, for me, hits all the right notes for a light, approachable, beautiful game.

Some final thoughts

I’m struck, every time I play Cascadia, by how aggressively simple it is. You can put any tile in any empty space on your tableau, as long as it shares a full edge with another tile. You can put an animal down on any tile that has that animal pictured on it. There aren’t edge cases and strange exceptions. You pick a tile and a token, and you put that tile and token down somewhere, trying to maximize your animal and tile scoring.

But for a game with VERY few rules, there is a nice amount of depth. I don’t find the game to run on auto-pilot; the game gives you space to be clever and set yourself up for future success. Within the bare-bones rules, it’s fun to discover clever combinations of tiles and animals.

Perhaps the strongest compliment I can pay to the game is this: the games where I think I have the prettiest landscapes and the most interesting layous of animals often end up being the games where I score the most points. Making good decisions with your tile-laying often leads to aesthetically pleasing outcomes, and those beautiful configurations are often rewarded at the end of the game, too.

The game takes less than two minutes to set up, too, and can be played in under 45 minutes and put away almost as quickly as it was set up. That’s a huge plus for a game that will almost only see time on my table as a solo game.

Cascadia is a thoughtful, clean game that stands out in an era where designers might be criticized for bloat and excess in their game designs. I would love to see it get a small expansion for increased variety - maybe just some new scoring cards, or something else that keeps the game true to its light roots. But I’m happily surprised to say that this will join the rotation of light, short filler games that I unwind to from time to time. Not every game needs to Do Something That’s Never Been Done Before, and Cascadia is a delightful reminder of that simple fact.

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If you like this review, please check out my other reviews of solo games and variants in the Meeple, Myself, and I series!

Oh! And I have a podcast where I do scripted, essay-style things on solo gaming! Check it out here!

A nicely crafted, and well written review. Good job. And I'm glad you embraced the "beat your own score" system rather than dismiss it, as I see so many BGG members do in these forums. There's room for both, "beat your own score", and "beat the AI" systems in solo gaming, for sure.

I've been thinking about picking this up to have as a gateway game since I don't have much else good for that. Nice to hear that solo is fun as well; thanks for the review!

I will also put in a plug for Stone Valley Games. I discovered them quite by accident about six months ago and have had several very good experiences with them. It's always nice to support a small brick-and-mortar business.

I think I somewhat agree that this is better as a solo game than a multiplayer game. Gameplay-wise, very little changes between the two modes. Pretty much the only difference between the solo mode and the two-player mode is you know exactly which tile the opponent is going to take, and there's a very small change to the scoring for the territories. But, because there are no other players to get annoyed, you're free to take as long as you want really analysing what can go where.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia flows! A review from a Dutch enthusiast

Long awaited and since a few days finally in the Netherlands, thanks to White Goblin Games: Cascadia. Designed by Randy Flynn, a new designer for us. Because of the looks we immediately picked up this game and played it eight times in two days. Short summary: Cascadia has a fantastic rhythm of play, whether you play it alone, in pairs or with three/four.

Background

Cascadia is a nature reserve that extends over a large part of the so-called Northwest Pacific of Canada and the US. A wooded hilly landscape between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. I've travelled there once and indeed the bears just walk across your camp site, if they're not shoveling salmon in the waterfall beyond, the elks or wapitis show themselves in divine greatness in sunlit clearings in the boreal forest. You're on the lookout for raccoons and foxes that also want your piece of salmon and the red-tailed hawks are not to be missed in the huge blue sky above you. A fantastic area, worth a visit. And a game, obviously.

Theme

I had already been warned that Cascadia is a completely abstract game despite all the natural areatiles and animals. Those salmons, wapitis and red-tailed hawks might as well have been pink, beige and blue cubes. A salmon on a prairi tile and that brown bear in the water made me chuckle. Which isn't bad of course. Cascadia is an abstract point puzzle. Carcassonne meets Bear Park and Kingdomino, only in more fancy hexagons.

Anyway, the material is nice and the images are sympathetic. And in the sets of animals you make, the theme comes shining through thinly. Bears in pairs, salmon meander, buzzards soar lonely above the landscape. If you want to see it, the theme is there.

Rules and age

Cascadia's rules are so simple, you'll wonder why this game wasn't invented years ago. Within five minutes you can play this, also with children of 8/9 years by the way. Our 8 year old has now played twice and won once.

Interaction

There doesn't seem to be much interaction at first, except when you take a set of tile/animal before another player. But we found out that the interaction is not that bad at all. Admittedly: you can hardly check what the other person can grab because the display is constantly refreshed, but because you can see what the others have lying around, you know exactly what they need in terms of animals or areas so you also know what you need for a better score. And you know approximately how much of everything is still available because every piece is on the table. That information determines your own game. Do you follow the same strategy as your fellow player(s) or do you choose a different one? This 'strategic connection' with each other turns out to be quite gentle and I think it fits well with Cascadia.

Cascadia flows

What I'm really excited about is the flow of the game. It is phenomenally good with all player numbers. To play Cascadia is to take territory tiles and animals, place them both as best as you can, then refresh the supply and move on to the next player. This all happens at a pleasant forward cadence, as if you were rowing your canoe in permanent rapids on a small river somewhere in Cascadia (well, not exactly, but I have to get there again sometime, that's for sure).

There is something new waiting for you every turn, there is always something useful to take and you can always make a multiple choice. This applies to all players, which leads to an exciting final score. An endcount that is made extra exciting by the use of intermediate scores on the scoreblock.

Replayability

I can't say much about the replayability after eight games, but I notice that everyone is looking forward to another play. Even more than with other new games in the house. So for now, we'll just keep playing.

Conclusion

Mister Flynn did an incredibly good job designing this game. Cascadia flows and fizzes on your table until the tiles run out and the exciting final count takes place. It's clear: for us Cascadia is incredibly fun to play and one of the top games of this year.

Postscript

1. This is a translation of a post on the Dutch/Belgium game forum Bordspelmania (www.bordspelmania.eu). Excuse me for eventual mistakes in the language.

2. After this review we kept on playing game after game. It stays quick, fun and the fantastic flow doesn't wear off. This game stands solid.

3. Why this game is on BGG abstract number one, I don't know. But it will have to reach number 2 of the Family list eventually, right after our absolute number one from Elisabeth Hargrave.

Nice review. I plan on picking up a copy shortly.

But you might want to know that "fizzle" in United States commonly means

1. To make a hissing or sputtering sound.

2. To fail or end weakly, especially after a hopeful beginning.

So at first glance, I thought you were saying that you were disappointed in this game. I see now you meant it was hot or exciting, in which case "sizzle" might have been a better (although non-alliterative) word. Any way, I look forward to getting my own copy.

Ralph Reinert

@ralphreinert

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Hi Ralph, thanks! I thought for years that fizzing or to fizz meant something like "bubbling" or "sparkling" water, like in waterfalls? But it means the same as fizzle? The latter is definitely not what I mean to say in the title.

I will look after it and edit. Thanks.

"I've travelled there once and indeed the bears just walk across your camp site."

Seriously, tho, nice background and game info. Always nice to see a game you can play with kids also.

I do not think fiz and fizzle mean the same thing.

Fizzle is associated with "to fizzle out" i.e.to fizz less and less until it is gone, so tends to have a negative impact these days. Older usage of the word was more associated with fizzing bit it's not used that way any more. It's generally an "old fashioned" word so people think of the expression as opposed to the meaning it used to have.

Cherie

@CherieB

"I've travelled there once and indeed the bears just walk across your camp site."

Seriously, tho, nice background and game info. Always nice to see a game you can play with kids also.

The bears really did happen, lucky for us we were just brushing our teeth in one of those camping site bathrooms. And no kids around back then. In a cold spring/summer they (usually black bears btw) can go downhill because of the lack of food in the mountains. There were bears galore that summer.

But my best memory of the area was the golden wapiti in full armor in the sunlight on an open spot in the forest of Manning Park. That was awesome. Anyway, maybe Cascadia is a bit of an abstract game, it surely brings back good memories.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Solo Gaming Badger's Review - Cascadia

Overview

Concept: Draft tiles and Animals to create a sort of Animal Preserve while trying to satisfy different requirements for points that change each game.

Solo Changes: The rightmost tile and right most animal token are removed at the end of each turn from the drafting pool.

Price: ~$40

Players: 1-4

First Game Length: 25-30 Minutes

Subsequent Game Lengths: 20 Minutes

(1 Is easiest 10 is hardest)

Difficulty to Learn: 2 / 10

Difficulty to Master: 6 / 10

Set up Time: 5 Minutes

Teardown Time: 5 Minutes

Review

My first playthrough of Cascadia was interesting but not overly exciting I admit that. I never judge a game based on my first playthrough though as I’m often checking the rulebook 3-4 times to make sure I’m doing things right. To the game’s credit the rules are quite simple and the game itself flows quickly which I appreciate! Right off the bat I love the simple artwork. I’m always drawn a bit more towards games with animals as a theme so that was a plus from the get go. I Also like that the game is very simple to set up and put away. The inside cutout for storage is fantastic for the tiles. A nice neat row of them all in a specific place it just looks nice and they stay still even with the box on it’s side. I like that a lot more than “Throw all the hexagons in a bag”. The Animal tiles can go in the bag of course, they belong in there for the game anyway!

So, how does it play? Pretty simple but also complicated and that’s what I love. Something that I can understand easily and spen multiple playthroughs mastering. You quickly learn how to draft tiles and how to place them, but where to place them becomes the challenge. In every game the method in which you score for each animal changes, each has 4 different methods and you can either follow the game type (I’ll explain that later) or shuffle and deal them at random. This means that there are technically 1,024 different scoring Variations though they are all similar in theme per animal. For example, Bears are always about groups. The size of the group differs from card to card. Foxes are always about the animals around them, etc…

You also score points based on the size of your habitats. Each tile has 1-2 habitat types. Forest, Prairie, Marshland, River, and Mountain. You want to work to both create the largest habitats of each type while also satisfying your animal score requirements. It’s that combination of things that really gets ya thinking and you have to strategize a bit especially as a solo player. You know that no matter what tiles you take, the rightmost one after you take a tile will go away. Do you need the second tile from the right, but not this moment? Well then you can’t take the rightmost tile or you lose it.

I’ve played through the game a good 7 or 8 times now and Each one has felt different not only because of the random nature of the scoring, but the order of drafting as well. That said… you may be wondering what makes this game so fun to replay if in the end you are just doing the same thing over and over with slight variation. That’s where the game’s achievement system comes into play and it’s a small stroke of genius.

In the manual there are 2 pages dedicated to different game rules. The first four games are simple, use Scoring Cards A, B, C and D for games 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. Your goal is to reach the target score for the game, usually around 80 for the first 4. After that things get funky and interesting. Game 5 for example, you score (I believe it was Salmon) 3x instead of the normal one, encouraging you to focus more on the salmon scoring than the others. It drastically changes how the game will be played. I imagine more so for group play since all players will be going for the salmon at that point. But even for Solo play you want to make sure not to lose those precious salmon tiles at the end of your turn. They get more and more complicated after that, it’s fantastic for the solo players and for the longevity of the game itself. You keep track of your achievements on a track so you can progress through it slowly. There are other achievements that can apply to any game that you can earn as well, but only 1 per game. So there is a lot to do! It brings the game up from being “Fun but repetitive” to “I can’t wait to play the next game”

The game is simple to learn, fun to play and doesn’t take a long time to go through alone either. You get into a quick Rhythm of draft, place, pick new tiles/tokens. Draft, place…. Repeat. I still struggle with some of the strategies but that’s part of the fun. I’m awful at satisfying the fox scoring cards, they are always my lowest in every game so I still have to work on it! I highly recommend this to any solo gamer out there though most of you probably already have it. I don’t have any real complaints honestly. If I had even the tiniest of nits to pick, it’s that the quality of the bag the animal tokens go in itself is meh. That’s me trying to actually find anything to poke at and it's not even a good one!

Verdict

10/10

It only takes up to 4 players.

A review of a game featuring foxes from Jack Fox.

Oh! You are correct my apologies I had thought that because there was 5 starter tiles that it had 5 players. My mistake! I shall correct that

Dave Rathbun

@drathbun

A review of a game featuring foxes from Jack Fox.

It was the role I was born to fulfill!

Cascadia is a celebration of the wildlife in the Pacific Northwest. While there is indeed a High Desert in Oregon, the yellow Habitat tiles in the game represent prairies, not deserts.

My gosh you are right! I Will fix that in my post, thank you for pointing that out! I lived in Arizona for a while so I guess my brain just though "Yellow looks like sand = desert"

Which now that I think about it makes no sense, none of these animals apart from MAYBE a hawk would be anywhere near that.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia review - What does the Fox say?

Cascadia review - What does the Fox say?

Our team travels a lot, so this time we're going to the wild west of the USA. It won't be an expedition about cowboys, shootings or robberies, but about exploring the beautiful land full of lush flora and fauna. Before setting off, you'll need to pack and of course, you must gather your party before venturing forth.

Backpack

We'll start our trip by checking the contents of our bag. It is colourful, beautiful and handy. The wooden animal tokens roll well. Maybe a little too well, as we often had to scoot under the table or push back the sofa to search for them. They also have nicely printed animals that don't rub off easily. When putting the game into the box, we have to work a little bit harder to stuff everything in, but fortunately, it's not that much of a problem.

Guide

The rules are very simple and the gameplay is very intuitive. There are also plenty of examples in our guide so we'll have no problem finding our way to victory. Let's also read something about the land itself and its inhabitants, because it will give even more atmosphere to our trip. I like the educational aspects in board games.

Boots

We choose 5 cards of different animal species that will score us points at the end of the game and we are ready to start the tour. We each start our journey with a triple land tile. We also place 4 terrain tiles in the market and place an animal token next to each one. In our turn we will take an animal and the tile lying next to it and add it to our lands. The chosen animal can be placed on any tile as long as the symbol matches. Each player does this exactly 20 times and then we count the points.

At the end of the game we get points for fulfilling the requirements from the animal cards and for the biggest cluster of each terrain. If we have more tiles of any terrain than the other players then we get extra points. Unused cones will give us one point each.

Cones

It won't be easy to score points for every animal so we usually have to choose what we can lay out at the moment. Someone could say that the game is random. However, to our help come this little pinecones. Thanks to them we can manipulate the animals and decide which of them can settle down with us. We can spent cone to take any animal and tile. Of course, we also get a free exchange in case 3 or 4 of the same animals appear on the market.

Watch

In Cascadia we practically never wait for our move - we simply take a tile, an animal token and the next player can makes his moves. There will certainly be some species that like to drag out their turn a bit, but despite this, I still have the positive impression that there is something going on in the game all the time. Cascadia is actually an enjoyable solitaire game, and all in all it doesn't matter how many players we play the game with. The gameplay, which is fast anyway, will last just a little longer. There is also no negative interaction between players, but overall I didn't find this to be a disadvantage. Well, maybe only when someone takes away our precious token that we wanted, then you can say some very uncensored words. But why to get angry in such a peaceful game?

Map

What attracted me the most to Cascadia is its replayability. There are 5 animal species available in the game and each one scores differently at the end of the game. Buzzard is not fond of other buzzards, Deer likes to make circles, Bear plays best in a group, Salmon loves to stand in line and fox prefers to be surrounded by other forest inhabitants. There are 4 types of each animal so this will give us even more varied gameplay. Of course, most of them are actually different variations of each other, but mechanically it's very enjoyable.

In our games we rarely chose the fox because it was hard to surround it. It also didn't provide us with that many victory points to focus on. The buzzard was probably the biggest favourite of the visitors because, thanks to its solitary nature, it was easy to set it up. Ultimately it didnt break other scoring animals.

What we really had to look at in the game was to maintain a good balance between meeting the conditions of the animals and scoring for territories. We could add our tiles in any combination and we weren't limited by a warm quilt like in Calico.

What does the Fox say?

Exploring the areas of Cascadia was very enjoyable and even novice travellers managed to do it. The paths were varied and the passing landscapes made our time more amusing. We may not have discovered anything new here, but we had a great time playing solo or with friends. Cascadia provided us with unlimited tile adding and we liked that too. Whether we're playing with family members or with hardened Euro freaks, the game was a lot of fun and we'll definitely be returning to it often. However, to play again I have to look under the sofa as my wife has been playing with the salmon tokens again.

Final Score: 9/10

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More Reviews

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===RESEÑA===

Título: Initial impression of Cascadia (with kids!)

Pattern completion with drafting are probably the most low-conflict games there are out there. These are the games where you pick up something and then complete a puzzle or pattern on your individual board or play area to score points. There is a fan base for these games but there is also a group that find it boring and repetitive. Safe to say the latter group are mainly seasoned gamers who have more choices for board gaming.

As you expect, Cascadia falls into this category of pattern completion games where each player draft a pair of randomly assigned terrain tiles and animal tokens to their play area to form patterns for scoring. Terrain scoring is based on arranging tiles of similar type, with the largest terrain of each type scoring 1 point per tile for every player and then bonus points doled out to the player with the largest terrain type when compared with all others. No surprise there. Probably most of the fun, and also variety, comes from scoring the animal tokens. Animal tokens are placed on tiles with matching animal symbols. The job for each player is to form specific patterns based on the scoring cards. There are 5 animal types and hence, 5 scoring patterns to take into consideration. Scoring patterns are typical of what you would expect in a Euro: groups of token in 2s, 3s, 4s, in a straight line, on every other tile, flanked by other types of animal tokens, etc. Basically, scoring combination for tokens is in whatever type of pattern completion you can possibly imagine. There are several scoring cards for each of the 5 animal types and for each game you choose only one card per animal. So, scoring in each game is unique and the number of combinations are staggering. Together with terrain scoring and animal scoring, there are enough variables for scoring to keep everyone busy.

Most of the time, you play Cascadia to maximize scoring for your own board. I suppose you could play defensively in the game, but I am not sure if you ever want to. I suppose if you really are fighting for the biggest terrain, you may want to choose a tile that prevents your opponent from beating you to it. But honestly, the scoring matrix is such that it is unclear the points you earn from the majority scoring will offset the loss of not picking the tile you really want and scoring points in other ways. To me at least, I don’t think we ever play Cascadia defensively. There just isn’t much incentive to do so.

If the rules sound simple and the game even simpler, that’s because it is. Perhaps that is the selling point for the game. You pick up the game, you play and pack it up in 30 minutes. There is not much rules explanation and once you get it, you get it. This is the type of game you play with family and kids to burn time and to keep yourself occupied. It is fun, but in a quiet way. There is no interaction between players and everyone is just pondering their own piece of the puzzle. I was reminded of how quiet our family sessions have been when playing Cascadia. It is neither good nor bad, just an observation. This is not a game you pull out to have a raucous, and loud evening. This is more a game that comes out after homework and before bed time.

The components for the game are superb. This was a Kickstarter game which I purchased in the after market and I am impressed by both the art and quality of the product. The game is very tactile and the wooden tokens and thick cardboard is a joy to handle. It does remind me of the tiles in Kingdomino and in fact, the game play of Kingdomino is also quite similar to Cascadia. So if you like Kingdomino, this will be up your alley.

The question of course is, do you need so many games that are of this genre and play style? Of course, this really depends on the individual. I would say there is extra value for purchasing these games if you have kids of perhaps older adults, like parents or grandparents, that you game frequently with. I think because these games come out at such high frequency, I am more inclined to play them and then rotate them out of my collection in favor of newer ones to try. This is probably what I will end up doing for my family. This is not necessarily a negative review for the game. In fact, I quite like Cascadia for what it is and do feel engaged when I am playing it. As a puzzle, it is an interesting challenge to maximize scoring but there is little else you can do each turn tactically or even strategically. So, my engagement with the game lasts as soon as I open the box and ends when I stuff everything back. There is very little after thought or any emotion provoked after each session. I mean honestly, Old Maid which is not even a game, gets us into a tizzy more often than Cascadia. It's just a different type of fun.

Initial impression: Average

Kids Corner

7 years 3 months: OK, the greatest value for us is that my kid picked it up really quickly and could play the intermediate scoring variant very well after a single session. I haven’t mentioned, but Cascadia has two family-friendly scoring variants which I highly recommend for the first few games. I have to admit though, her reception toward the game was far from enthusiastic. We played several sessions and her reaction has been muted. I picked this up precisely because I thought she would enjoy the animal theme and also the game play scales pretty well between players. But thus far, her response is a far cry from what I saw from Zombie Kidz and also MicroMacro Crime City. She has been exposed to drafting games before and she has played many Euro point scoring type games. Not sure why this one wasn’t received as enthusiastically. I wonder if its because each action is quite repetitive and solitary and Cascadia is definitely one of the longest of this type she has played. Still, it’s early days and as a gamer, I thought this game would strike a good middle ground for me and my spouse with my kid. We shall see whether she picks this one out from the pile or gets consistently sidelined.

Note: After at least half a dozen more plays, the enthusiasm hasn't picked up much. I think I know why. The game is just really dry and the lack of interaction between turns has turned her off. I am beginning to see that dry, solitary Euros will not work for her. She is really searching for interaction when she games. That said, Cascadia is headed to the trade/sale pile as the game also hasn't captured the attention for the adults that much either.

For an idea of what my kid likes even though I don't always get it right, visit

https://daoofboardgaming.home.blog/

Quote:

I am beginning to see that dry, solitary Euros will not work for her. She is really searching for interactions when she games.

Attagirl

===RESEÑA===

Título: Meeple Mountain reviews Cascadia - Building a Cardboard Countryside

This review of Cascadia originally appeared on Meeple Mountain.

https://www.meeplemountain.com/reviews/cascadia/

The geographic region of North America known as Cascadia encompasses some (or all) of 8 US states (Northern California and Nevada, Northwestern Wyoming, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Alaska) as well as the Canadian province British Columbia and Yukon territory. Stretching for more than 2,500 miles and encompassing nearly 1.4 million square miles, it contains over 75 distinct ecoregions with an astonishing number of plants, animals, and habitats. It’s also stunningly beautiful.

What a perfect setting for a game.

Cascadia Overview

In Cascadia, from Flatout Games and designer Randy Flynn, 1-4 players will build their own biodiverse cardboard countryside by placing habitat tiles (forest, wetland, river, mountain, and prairie) and wildlife tokens (foxes, elks, salmon, bears, and hawks). Players will earn points at the end of the game for the largest group of each habitat type, as well as for placing wildlife into specific patterns as indicated on cards selected during setup. Cascadia is easy to learn and play, so let’s quickly walk through the setup and a turn.

Setting up Cascadia

To set up a game of Cascadia players will shuffle and stack all of the habitat tiles then place them to the side. Mix up the starter habitat tiles and give one to each player.

Place all of the wildlife tokens into the bag and mix well. Then deal out 4 face up habitat tiles and pair each of them with a face up wildlife token. Set the nature tokens to the side (more on that later). Finally, select the A, B, or C wildlife cards and place them to the side where all players can see them. When you’re done, your setup should look something like this.

A Turn in Cascadia

Over the course of a game of Cascadia, players will build up their own ecosystem by placing habitat tiles and wildlife tokens. On your turn you’ll select one of the habitat tile and animal token pairs and place them in your environment.

The only rules for habitat tile placement is that your new tile may not be placed on top of another habitat tile and must be placed against the face of an existing tile. Matching the geography of the placed tile isn’t a rule, but while geography doesn’t matter for placement it will have an impact on your scoring, as well as where you’re able to place your wildlife tokens.

After your habitat tile has been placed, you’ll move on to placing your wildlife tokens. Placement rules for animals also have only two rules: a wildlife token can only be placed on top of a matching animal icon of an existing habitat tile and only one wildlife token can be placed on each habitat tile. Since you’ll get a large portion of your points from scoring animal cards, you’ll want to pay close attention to where the animals wind up.

In the rare case you can’t place a wildlife token that you selected, it’s returned back to the bag.

Almost all of the habitat tiles in Cascada feature a mix of geography, but there are a handful of special habitat tiles called keystone tiles which showcase only a single type of habitat. When placing an animal onto this tile, players will earn a nature token which can be spent to split up the paired habitat tile and wildlife tokens during the selection process.

Scoring Points in Cascadia

There are 4 ways to score points in Cascadia:

• 1 point for each remaining nature token

• 1 point per tile in your largest group for each habitat type

• 0-3 points for having the largest group of habitat type (point values vary by player count)

• Wildlife scoring cards (see below)

Habitat and nature token scoring is easy to understand, but let’s have a look at some examples for the "A" wildlife cards.

• Elk score points for being in a straight line.

• Foxes score points for each unique animal type in the tiles surrounding them, even other foxes.

• Grizzlies score for each pair of bears, with no other bears on the surrounding tiles.

• Salmon score points for being in a run, but not necessarily a straight line. Runs cannot be next to each other.

• Hawks score an increasing number of points for each hawk that is next to no other hawk.

Finishing a Game of Cascadia

Once the stacks of habitat tiles are gone the game ends immediately and players move on to the scoring phase. Flatout Games have provided a convenient and attractive scoring sheet which makes collecting the point totals a snap.

Final Thoughts on Cascadia

Here at Meeple Mountain we have a concept that we call Builder’s Satisfaction. It’s the feeling you get after playing a game that results in something tangible and appealing. Be it an ancient Greek city in Santorini or an abstract dice sculpture in Blueprints, these are games which leave you happy that you just made something that looks cool.

Cascadia is like that for me. The tiles and wildlife tokens are so beautifully and lovingly illustrated, and fit together so perfectly that they form a wonderful tableau expanding out in front of you. During my games I found myself selecting tiles which would complement my landscape in addition to just earning me points. In fact I intentionally arranged my environment in such a way that mountains led to rivers which led into wetlands and prairies…because that’s how nature works, right? Even though I never won a game, I was always proud of the environment that I crafted!

And it’s easy to be proud of your results in this game…the artwork from Beth Sobel is so wonderful that it’s genuinely hard to tell that the grizzly on the scoring card isn’t real; the way the light glints off the fur on its back and head is simply marvelous. And the rest of the artwork is similarly inspired. I have yet to find a piece of art from Beth I didn’t love.

But don’t think that the game is all show, Cascadia has enough strategy for everyone. From your very first turn you must choose not only the right habitat tile to allow you to map out your strategy, but you also have to hope you get the right animal tokens to go along with it. Similar to Calico, Public Market, and Dollars to Donuts (also from the Flatout Games team), players must constantly balance the parallel needs of habitat tile and wildlife token, but also be willing to quickly shift their strategy if the right draws don’t come up. In my first game, my 7 year old son kept hogging all of the salmon tokens, leaving me with none, and wound up with 6 of them…a cool 20 points. He went on to beat me…which is another feather in Cascadia’s cap; a 7 year old was able to pick up the game and win on his first try, while also keeping me engaged in the game.

Since the tiles and tokens are drawn and assigned randomly you’re never quite sure of the pairings that present themselves. But that’s where the nature tokens come in, giving players a way to split up the tiles and tokens and select exactly the right set for your needs. But you still have to get a keystone tile and be able to place the right animal on it. But honestly that’s a minor issue for me. I don’t mind a bit of luck now and then, it keeps things fresh.

Cascadia is a perfect blend of compelling gameplay and engaging theme from designer Randy Flynn and gorgeous artwork from artist Beth Sobel. It’s safe to say that Flatout Games knocks it out of the park once again. If you’re looking for a high quality family weight game then Cascadia should be on your list…and on your shelf. It’s currently live on Kickstarter, don’t pass this one up!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cascadia - Lone Bear Solo Review!

This review with lots of lovely pictures was originally published here: https://www.favouritefoe.com/board-game-review/cascadia-solo...

Heading into the beautiful Pacific Northwest alone, Cascadia by Flatout Games and AEG is a gorgeous solo adventure.

Publisher: Flatout Games, AEG Games

Designer: Randy Flynn

Artist: Beth Sobel

Release date: 2021

1-4 Players

Age: 10+

30 – 45 mins

Favouritefoe score: 9/10

\*Gorgeous \* Tile Laying \* Spatial Puzzle \* Solo Mode \* Accessible \* Versatile \* Thematic \*Easy to Learn \* Scoring Objectives \* Variable Set Up \*

I’m Sorry, Randy!

Before I do anything else, I must apologise to one of the loveliest people in board gaming, Randy Flynn (who you can find out more about in our interview here). I kickstarted Cascadia with wild enthusiasm ages ago, and I have been playing it since it arrived. And when I say playing, I mean a lot.

I kept adding it to my “to-do-a-review” list. Right at the top in bold underlined. And I normally refuse to leave a list unchecked. I even added a (what is now a very flexible interpretation of the words) “COMING SOON!” entry onto my review page. But then I would get the box out as a visual reminder and would find myself using the time to play it again instead of writing about it! So, Randy, I am sorry it has taken me this long to share my thoughts on Cascadia!

So, with restraint ratcheted up, I’m going to tell you about my experiences with Cascadia. But, I’m going to do things a wee bit differently to my usual reviews. I am going to focus on the solo play. Because, dear friends, Cascadia has become one of my all-time favourite go-to single player games. And, that means it inhabits a very precious place in not only my collection, but also my heart.

Before I reveal why, however, here’s a very brief overview of what Cascadia is, what you are trying to achieve, and how you go about doing it.

Playtime In The Pacific Northwest!

Cascadia is a tile laying game set in the gorgeous Pacific Northwest, USA aka the “Cascadia” region (aha!). Each turn you pick and place hexes to create terrains that provide the correct habitats for the diverse and beautiful local wildlife. It is a strategy game that brings in territory building, pattern matching, and hand (well, tile) management.

Regardless of player count, your starter tile is a 5 Habitat Tile hex combo – it will show all 5 terrain types (Mountains, Forests, Prairies, Wetlands, and Rivers) with one or more animals on each (Bears, Elk, Salmon, Hawk, and Fox) – they call those areas home. The number of Habitat Tiles in the pool depends on the number of competing conservationists around the table, but the set-up and gameplay is the same.

Each turn you then pick a Habitat Tile and associated Wildlife Token from the 4 randomly paired choices on offer. Your Habitat Tile of choice must be placed next to an existing hex in your region so that at least one side is next to another tile. Unlike games like Carcassonne and Isle of Skye, adjacent terrains don’t have to match, but you’ll get more points at the end of the game if you are able to create “corridors” of a single terrain type (with even more bonus points if yours is the largest!).

The accompanying Wildlife Token can be placed on any tile (new or existing) showing that animal. Only one Wildlife Token can be placed on each tile, and once it has settled there, there’s no uprooting it to somewhere else!

Buddy Up!

In most cases, you must take the Habitat Tile and Wildlife Token below it as a pair. But, if you place an animal on a tile with a Nature Token on it (called a “Keystone Tile”), on a later turn, you can use that little bonus pinecone to either (a) pick and mix a pair that suits you better, or (b) remove the Wildlife Tokens and replace them before making your selection.

When you’re done, the pool of tiles and tokens are replaced at random, and the next player takes their turn, choosing from the 4 pairs on offer. Note that if 4 Wildlife Tokens are all the same, this is known as “overpopulation”, and they are removed and replaced with 4 new randomly selected ones. It can also happen when there are 3 matching animals on offer. But in that case, it is the active player’s choice as to whether those 3 are replaced or not.

The game ends when the pool of habitat tiles runs out (which is, rather satisfyingly, exactly 20 turns per player).

Curious Creatures!

Now, that all sounds rather straightforward. So, here’s where the puzzle ramps up. Each game, there are 5 Wildlife Goals. There is one for each type of featured animal, and there are multiple sets (which can be mixed and matched), such that no single game plays according to the same scoring conditions as another.

The goals are spatial, and seem in keeping with each of the animals represented. So, for example, salmon score higher the more you have in an adjacent run, and Elks like to be with their buddies so score better in groups. They’re fussy though, and have to be in the precise positions shown on the card. Bears are less particular, but they do like a bit of social distancing between their sleuths!

The goals themselves are juicy point providers, but it is impossible to achieve them all and get the corridor bonuses in just 20 turns. On that basis, decisions have to be made. You have to choose what you are going to target, bearing(! in mind the luck of the Token and Tile draw. And then flip reverse your strategy when the wrong Habitats and Wildlife appear!

If that all seems a little overwhelming for you or someone in your group, don’t worry. There are family and intermediate variants that narrow down the scoring objectives.

Solo Settling!

Hardly anything changes for the solo mode set up. It is in fact almost identical to a 2 player game. There is no AI to operate. You just take your turn, but before replacing the pair like you usually would, you discard the tile and token in the right most space. Once the remaining two pairs have been moved along, you replace the vacant spaces with two new Habitat Tiles (from a stack on the far left of the draw line) and Wildlife Tokens from the bag. If you have played Calico solo, you’ll be familiar with the movement.

There is a slight variation in the scoring of corridors for solo mode – you have to have at least 7 matching, adjacent terrain tiles to get a 2 point bonus. But besides that, it is a standard BYOS affair.

Animal Achievements and Rule Restrictions!

So far, I have been focussing on the standard game (at all player counts). But, when you feel like you have got your Cascadia wings, you can launch into campaign mode which takes you on a hike through the Cascadian landscape. And here, Randy has had a little help from his CoLab friends, Robert Melvyn and Shawn Stankewich. Again in a similar vein to Calico, you will play the same game, but with progressively more difficult scoring criteria:

Scenarios – these set which Wildlife Goals to use each game as well as the score/additional criteria you must fulfil in order to achieve them.

Achievements – these are straightforward goals, and the winner of the game only gets to tick the achievement off on their hiking trail if they hit it.

Rule Restrictions – these can be tricky but fortunately you only play one restriction per game!

Note: Achievements and Rule Restrictions aren’t intended for solo play, but I can’t see why not (and, so long as you don’t tell anyone, I do use them for added crunch sometimes!)

Lone Bear!

Okay, so the above would not the best strategy in the point scoring stakes, but playing Cascadia by myself is pure puzzly joy. It’s not flashy. It doesn’t take an age to set up. There’s no complicated AI to operate. It is just me, a stack of hex tiles, a bag of tokens, and 5 cards. 20 turns to make something satisfyingly synergistic. And my brain likes it. No, my brain LOVES it.

I sit and look at the row of pairs, sometimes for a really long time. And a series of trade-offs and options run through my head. A cerebral Chinook Salmon swims around my brain suggesting this tile and pondering that objective. Everything about Cascadia feels calm. Methodical. Meditative. I almost feel like I am breathing in the fresh mountain air when playing.

And although I can sometimes be left feeling like a poor relation when solo mode in games are a simple BYOS, the added campaigns in Cascadia offer more. They bring a wonderful selection of challenges that don’t need an opponent to bring them to life.

Like Calico solo, Cascadia is simply my brain versus the game. Mitigating luck of the draw with Nature Tokens and smart choices. This is a chilled, pace-free, hygge game that hits that sweet 20 minute solo space. One that I bring to the table whenever I need to wind down after a wild day at work. A game of choice when my brain needs a hug.

Multiplayer has a similar chilled vibe. But, like the Hawk, the potential for hate drafting flies not too far over our heads. Probably because ShadowMeepleMedia and I can’t help ourselves when opportunity strikes. But in truth, Cascadia never gets to the same level of claws-out tile taking that Calico can. In Calico, I know that ShadowMeeple Media will get me on every objective, so getting in his way is a legitimate strategy. Likewise, he doesn’t find the spatial challenge difficult, so uses his time to mess with me (just because he can – see what I have to deal with??!! Hahah). But in Cascadia, we are each so focussed on making wonderful landscapes that any hex snatching is more coincidence than contrived.

I would say that solo Cascadia encourages a slightly different strategy to regular multiplayer mode. Because you always know what tiles are going to be scrapped at the end of your turn, you can almost stack the, well, stack in your favour. You can bank a tile that you know will be removed, even if you don’t need it straightaway. Not wishing to make this all about Calico, but the same chances arise there too.

Lush Landscapes!

The quality of Cascadia is what we have come to expect from the CoLab team at Flatout Games and AEG. Top quality components, excellent rule book, and heaps of thematic touches that breathe beautiful life into abstract strategy gaming. The rule book is full of gorgeous images and information about the region and the animals which inhabit it.

The stunning artwork by Beth Sobel, wooden tokens, chunky hexes and glossy cards are the same whichever copy you have (the KS version just has extra Wildlife Goals as a bonus). The thoughtful use of symbols throughout also makes this game pretty much colour independent which is great for players with CVD. I think the only thing I would have changed is the printing on the wooden Wildlife Tokens. In my set, some are quite faded. Perhaps a symbol cut into the wood in relief would have been extra lovely and just another way the natural feeling could have shined through. But I am being quite nit picky now!

The “easy to learn, hard to master” banner flies proudly over Cascadia, and is a perfect description of the game play. And don’t mention this to ShadowMeepleMedia, but when he is too busy to play, I don’t ever mind as I get Cascadia all to myself!!

Add a Roll

Nice review.

We are slowing playing through the Scenarios as solo competitions, latest here: Cascadia Solo Competition, Month 5 (February 2022)

If you want to join. Or just look at other scores.

Lone Bear? You won't score many points for that!

===RESEÑA===

Título: Dad's Review: Cascadia

Hey Everyone, I'm a dad who plays mostly solo but I also enjoy playing somewhat lighter games with my wife and kids so that will be my viewpoint here as I move through the review. Let's get to it!

Presentation - The artwork for the animal cards on this game are beautiful and the tiles and tokens in the game are of very nice quality. That's pretty much all the components in the game, but as you play and your ecosystem starts to take hold it's a nice sight to behold!

Setup/Takedown - Much like Calico, this game is very quick and easy to both setup and take down. Take out a number of tiles depending on player count, pick some animal cards and off you go!

Gameplay Solo - I've only played the solo game a few times, but since this is a multiplayer solitaire type of game, it will play virtually the same as multiplayer. There is a "campaign" of sorts which is similar to Calico in that it gives you a specific setup and some goals you need to achieve. As a solo game I think it fits the bill for a relaxing game that you can pull out and put back on the shelf in less than an hour. This would be a great late night game to play by yourself.

Gameplay Family - The wife and kids had a great time playing this game! My kids are 9 and 11 and they both fully understood the game in a matter of minutes. The turns play out very quickly so downtime is not really an issue. Almost everything you do in this game will score you points in some fashion so it is not too discouraging for even the less savvy players. I think there is a joy in just the tactile feel of the game when handling the tiles/tokens and it's very pleasing for all ages to get that run of same landtypes going. You'll often have one or two animals that you really want to get and the tension of whether or not someone is going to snag it before your turn definitely intensifies as the game goes on, but still in a lighthearted way.

Replayability Solo - There are 4 different ways in which each animal can score points, so there are a fair number of combinations you can see in Cascadia...that said, the scoring is not that different and you'll still be doing virtually the same thing each time you play. The scenarios definitely help with that in giving you specific setups and goals you are trying to achieve. Just be aware that the replayability for solo in this game is going to come with the puzzle you are presented with each game - that will be different every time and you'll always be trying to make optimal decisions whilst not knowing exactly which animals are going to come out of the bag so your planning will never be perfect.

Replayability Family - Our games have tended to be very close for the most part which makes this a hit for our family! Generally everyone will score highest in at least one animal type and one land type which is very exciting at the end to do the scoring to see who gets the bonuses for longest connected land types. Besides balance and many ways of scoring points, this game is just FUN!

Overall - Cascadia for me is a game I'd be happy to play at anytime with anyone. It's the perfect blend of gateway game that you can teach quickly to any group and also rich enough to be a pleasing experience to most gaming groups. As I previously mentioned regarding solo, I think this is mainly a game I would pull out at night to have a calming game or two, but this is definitely a game I will bring when visiting family and friends as it's sure to be a hit with many groups and it's not one that I see myself feeling tired of playing either - especially with a group.

Cascadia or Calico? - Just one last bit I thought I'd add since I own both Calico and Cascadia as they are both beautiful, well-produced tile laying games. If you are trying to decide on either Cascadia or Calico I think it just depends on your taste and what you are looking for. I prefer Calico for solo play as I feel it offers a greater challenge and the puzzle is definitely tighter - something that I like! However, if I play Calico with a family member, I am going to beat them almost every time because of the degree of difficulty and the time I have put into the game. When it comes to multiplayer, I think I prefer Cascadia. While both games are very simple to teach, a new player could do well in Cascadia much quicker than Calico which makes it a better multiplayer game for me. I feel like a new player could potentially win their first game of Cascadia but I would be shocked to lose a game of Calico to a brand new player because the puzzle is so tight in Calico. I think Calico is the better game but if I had to own just one I'd probably own Cascadia because I will get more play out of it with my family and friends.

Nice review!

Great review, agree with your sentiments on Cascadia being more of a family game and Calico being one that is more puzzly. My wife and I are approaching 20 plays this month alone and it feels addictive. We definitely played plenty of cascadia in the beginning too, but it felt a little too friendly.

===RESEÑA===

Título: Cas-okay-dia: A Cascadia Review

Late last year I fell in love with Calico, a game about sewing a quilt to attract cats by the same publisher and one of the same designers. Its cuddly kitties, layered scoring and devious cornering charmed me. Naturally, with Calico being such a hit, I had to grab myself a copy of Cascadia. Cascadia is often described as open and relaxing as opposed to Calico's closed and deliciously agonizing gameplay, while those descriptors are accurate, I found that Cascadia was lacking.

Now before hurling arrows my way, hear me out. I am writing this quick review for those who may be in the same boat as I was. I am a lover of tile laying games, breezy rulesets and obviously cats and when I was doing my research on Cascadia I hadn't come across very many criticisms. I think it is important to have as much information as possible and so I am sharing my opinion with the hopes it helps someone make an informed decision. Another note on this review, I am going to assume you already know the basic premise of the game and that you also know a little about Calico as I am going to contrast it heavily.

And with that said, back to nature! I didn't like Cascadia very much for two main reasons:

1. Open ended gameplay felt aimless

2. Scoring trade-offs were too simplistic

1. Open ended gameplay felt aimless

"Open-ended gameplay is aimless? How so? The fact that it is open ended is what makes it relaxing! You clearly don't know how to chill!" I hear you say and you are not wrong. My therapist is constantly telling me I need to relax more... Cascadia did not help me relax though, I mostly felt like I was on auto-pilot.

In Cascadia, having so many different scoring objectives and so many different opportunities to score any scoring objective it never felt like I was making much of a trade-off. If I decide to take that fox tile now or not, it won't matter because it'll likely come back later and if it doesn't the bear and wetlands tile offers me a similar amount of points.

I often found myself just choosing whatever gave me the most points short term and not worrying about the future. In addition, it was almost always clear there was one option that would give me more points short term so it always felt like an easy decision. I never felt like I was working toward something larger, it just felt kind of aimless, like I was doing a series of loosely connected actions instead of carefully weaving a tapestry of joy.

2. Scoring trade-offs were too simplistic

"Simplistic scoring? Have you not seen those high-level fancy shmancy Red-Tailed Hawk cards and those wriggly Chinook Salmon? You are either a genius or doing it wrong! Scoring all the animals well is hard! Let alone with the habitat tiles!" I hear someone think and while I'd like to think I'm a genius, I barely know what Chinook Salmon is, I call all pink fish salmon... I think my problem with the scoring is that I don't feel like there are enough levels in the interaction between the different scoring mechanisms.

Comparing it to Calico where each one of your tiles inherently affects your other tiles' possible placements, it always felt like even when I was doing something on one side of the board it mattered for the other side of the board. Cascadia feels a bit disjointed. I can work on some scoring here and some scoring there but they don't really affect each other unless they are directly next to each other. I think that's why fox scoring cards were my favourite scoring goals because their scoring requirements are about being surrounded by other animals, rather than just doing its own thing.

I would also argue that the habitat scoring is so easy that it barely interacts with the animal scoring. The fact that Cascadia tiles either fully contain a habitat or contain two separate habitats split in the middle means that there is a minimum of three options of how I can connect any habitat to a single side of any other tile of the same habitat. If both tiles are half habitat tiles that is 9 possible ways to connect the habitats, if one is a full tile and the other a half tile that is 18 possible ways to connect a habitat and if they both are full tiles then it is 36 possible ways to connect. That's a lot of options, so much so that it is almost guaranteed that you can connect the habitat tile and leave an opening to connect more.

Connecting the habitat tiles was honestly something I never really thought about. I compare this to Carcosonne or Land v.s. Sea, which, while only having two terrain types, have so many different combinations of them (1/6 sides, 2/6 sides, 2/6 sides on the opposite side of the tile, etc.) that it becomes difficult to connect things in the exact way that you want. That extra layer of restriction is something I find satisfying and with Cascadia generally lacking restriction it really didn't resonate with me.

To be clear, I am not saying it's a bad game, I am only saying that it is just an "okay" game for me. I honestly think it's well designed and a great game for people who like that type of openness. Through playing Cascadia a number of times I just learned that I don't like that openness. I learned that I actually value restriction and, in turn, the frustration it provides. Who knew?

EDIT: Grammar + formatting. Boy do I need to check my typos before posting...

I quite love this game, and you make fair criticisms I hadn’t considered before. I haven’t played Calico (though I’ve seen a lot of it played out on video), but I think the restrictive nature would frustrate me in a not-so-good way. I’d sure like to try it someday.

That said… I’ve noticed that my games of Cascadia have been decided by very slim margins. Enough so that I think the winner came out ahead only because they scrounged every point they were capable of throughout the game. It could be that those inconsequential scoring decisions you speak of are hardly inconsequential when it comes to the end scores?

Great review.

I'd love a game metric added to BGG that allowed users to rate openness vs restrictiveness.

Cooper Island would be high on restrictiveness. You might like it.

I feel exactly the same. Now I'm not a big tile laying fan to begin with, but I totally fell in love with Calico and thought if that was great, Cascadia would fit right in there.

But I got the same "problem" as you with Cascadia: It is too open, you can place your tiles wherever you want and will always find a way to score points. And in addition you can use the nature tokens to chose any combination of tile and animal to draw.

In Calico this is completely different and you need to think carefully where to place every tile to have a chance to score anything. And even then it is very easy to mess up because the scoring conditions (and the luck of the draw) can be really mean. I love it ^^

Although, if you are into solo gaming, you might give the later solo Scenarios a chance. They seem to be getting pretty hard to complete later on and it seems, there you really need to be careful where you place which tiles and animals.

Good review in which you clearly state your issues with the game without insulting those of us who love it. Rahdo is a reviewer who, while he liked Cascadia and kept it, ranks Calico much higher because he loves restrictiveness in games. If you haven't tried , I think it gives a similar feeling to Calico with the different restrictive scoring objectives and the fixed grid.

Derek A

@ScienceVictor

I quite love this game, and you make fair criticisms I hadn’t considered before. I haven’t played Calico (though I’ve seen a lot of it played out on video), but I think the restrictive nature would frustrate me in a not-so-good way. I’d sure like to try it someday.

That said… I’ve noticed that my games of Cascadia have been decided by very slim margins. Enough so that I think the winner came out ahead only because they scrounged every point they were capable of throughout the game. It could be that those inconsequential scoring decisions you speak of are hardly inconsequential when it comes to the end scores?

Thanks for the comment. I actually think that slim margin is part of what I am talking about. I found that when I played the decisions were obvious, it was for example clear that the elk with the wetlands tile would give me one point then maybe the fox in tundra. Having decisions that were obvious while at the same time the margins being so slim kind of made it feel a bit inconsequential and that it wasn't \*me\* that was making things happen but the luck of the draw. It felt like if everyone was playing at a high level the person who wins is not going to be the person who played the best game but that the game was almost playing itself and deciding on it's own who was the winner.

Does that make sense? I think in summary the strategy was simple enough to figure out quickly and so for me and my game group who play a lot of strategy games it didn't really provide enough for us feel like what we did mattered because were all playing at a similar level. I would have liked a more complex interaction between the scoring mechanisms or an added restriction to just add a bit more startegy.

All of that said, that is just how I felt and my opinion on the game. Most people adore it and I think it does what is trying to do exceptionally well, just not what I want in a game. Much perfer Calico.

Nick

@RockCartel

Great review.

I'd love a game metric added to BGG that allowed users to rate openness vs restrictiveness.

Cooper Island would be high on restrictiveness. You might like it.

ooooo! Looks cool! thanks for the recommendation.

Anke B

@Laurynne

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I am a solo gamer but alas I have already passed it on to a nice home who'll give it the love it deserves. I'm happy to hear though that there is that added wrinkle in the scenarios

The grid is life. That's why I've gone with Calico, am skipping Cascadia (until I inevitably change my mind), and look forward to Verdant .

Olivier

@KingEngine1

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Thanks for the kind words! I've had my eye on that one. Bought roll player instead but am super interested in the new legacy version coming out!

@KikiaH

Derek A

@ScienceVictor

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Makes perfect sense. I have the same exact criticism of Rummikub - the game my in-laws can’t seem to put away!

Rummikub is better than Cascadia though, right?

I'm waiting for Verdant, as well.

Quote:

I’ve noticed that my games of Cascadia have been decided by very slim margins

This. In our first few games, almost everyone scored the exact same number of points, the winner being decided by the number of pine cone tokens. The other players were only 1-3 points behind. Makes me very dubious about the amount of strategy involved, it just seems so easy for everyone to optimize their scoring without much player interaction. That's why I came here to find an explanation for my early observations, and the OP did a very good job of that. Thanks!

So far the game seems nice to take your mind off things after a long day. It is very pretty too. But Nr. 1 Abstract Game? Hmm...

@KikiaH

2. Scoring trade-offs were too simplistic...

...Cascadia feels a bit disjointed. I can work on some scoring here and some scoring there but they don't really affect each other unless they are directly next to each other...

...I would also argue that the habitat scoring is so easy that it barely interacts with the animal scoring...

...Connecting the habitat tiles was honestly something I never really thought about...

@KikiaH

...I am a solo gamer...

First off, it was refreshing to see someone write a "negative" review that comes off as informative and thoughtful, rather than just "negative". You did a good job of explaining where you felt the game fell short for you personally, and why. Kudos!

I'm not pushing back against your opinion (as everyone is entitled to one), but just wanted to offer a counterpoint for you and/or anyone who might be deciding whether or not to try Cascadia:

If you are indeed primarily a solo gamer, I think that this might be contributing to your view of Cascadia as aimless. To me, competition with the other players for the landscape bonuses was the source of the primary tension and "scoring trade-offs" that you felt were lacking. As several people have noted, the winner is often decided by only a handful of points. I've found that these critical few swing points often come from the handful of bonus points that are awarded to the owner of the largest clump of each type of landscape.

I agree with you when you say that it's not that difficult to score your animals optimally. The difficulty comes from scoring your animals optimally WHILE constantly keeping an eye on all of your opponents so that you know which of your landscapes to grow. If one opponent has largest mountain range on lockdown, then it would be wasted effort of you to grow your mountains. If you have a healthy lead in the largest forest, then you'd probably be better off trying to grow your marsh in order to overtake your friend who is barely ahead of you there... unless you think that that other player is about to try to overtake you in largest forest size, then you'd better defend that if there's a forest tile with acceptable animal slots... or maybe you shift your focus to grasslands, because the other players seem to be neglecting them this game and therefore they would be the most efficient source of points.

Often the tile that is easiest to maximize points from in your own little world is NOT the tile that gives you the most potential for winning the landscape battles, and that's where the trade-off comes in. Do you play it safe with the easy tile, or do you take a bigger risk by grabbing the tile that could bolster your two most important landscapes but might be harder to connect back in to your overall scoring grid? Beginner players might not even see this tension, and it's a great game for mixed groups because beginners can have a perfectly pleasant time organizing their lovely bears and salmon and such and growing whichever landscape is most convenient, while the more experienced players secretly battle it out for the largest of the key contested landscapes.

In "high level" play, the player who best navigates this nuance of convenience vs competition and maximizes their animal scoring WHILE managing to edge out the win in several landscapes is likely the player who will win. Granted, there isn't THAT much depth for "high level" play... If I'm at a table with 3 other "serious" gamers who want a tense challenge, we'll probably reach for something like Dune Imperium. But Cascadia is my favorite game to pull out to play with friends and family who wouldn't be interested in something more complex or frustrating.

All that to say, I think that much of the tension/scoring-tradeoff is probably lost in solo play.

Great synopsis, @KikiaH. I’m still “on the fence”regarding a purchase of this game. As many have said it doesn’t break new ground in any way , really- just another tile laying game; mostly abstract with a light thematic connection. Yet its presentation is somehow alluring to me. Maybe it’s the box cover art, the quality of the components or even the inventive solo options. But I’d like to address one of your main criticisms and offer up a possible solution. I think you’re on to something when you talked about scoring trade offs being too simplistic - and likely this alone is a major contributor to the other flaw you mentioned, i.e. - habitat scoring being too easy. Maybe I’m missing something, but while reading your excellent review, a rule revision occurred to me that addresses the above, which I believe would “tighten things up” a bit. Placement of tiles onto one’s tableau should require that they be placed along edges of like terrain, and not simply adjacency. If on every player’s turn, they must place a tile that is both adjacent and is the same terrain/habitat type as the adjoining tile, then this added requirement might be just enough to force a player to give more thought to every move by taking away some options. The player now has to decide what is the priority - aim for habitat scoring at the possible expense of wildlife scoring ? Or not. Let me know what you think. Thanks.

Bob Rizzolo

@bobrizz

Great synopsis, @KikiaH. I’m still “on the fence”regarding a purchase of this game. As many have said it doesn’t break new ground in any way , really- just another tile laying game; mostly abstract with a light thematic connection. Yet its presentation is somehow alluring to me. Maybe it’s the box cover art, the quality of the components or even the inventive solo options. But I’d like to address one of your main criticisms and offer up a possible solution. I think you’re on to something when you talked about scoring trade offs being too simplistic - and likely this alone is a major contributor to the other flaw you mentioned, i.e. - habitat scoring being too easy. Maybe I’m missing something, but while reading your excellent review, a rule revision occurred to me that addresses the above, which I believe would “tighten things up” a bit. Placement of tiles onto one’s tableau should require that they be placed along edges of like terrain, and not simply adjacency. If on every player’s turn, they must place a tile that is both adjacent and is the same terrain/habitat type as the adjoining tile, then this added requirement might be just enough to force a player to give more thought to every move by taking away some options. The player now has to decide what is the priority - aim for habitat scoring at the possible expense of wildlife scoring ? Or not. Let me know what you think. Thanks.

The habitat scoring method encourages you to do that (match the habitats of all touching edges) in order to extend multiple habitats on the same play. But doesn't require it.

If you require matching habitats on every edge, then there will be many times when you will interfere with meeting the wildlife goals. Score would be much lower.

The current rules require you to make this trade-off all of the time... Can i extend habitats and at the same time allow me to have a place to have a space on a future turn to meet a wildlife goal?

===RESEÑA===

Título: Silver Duck Reviews: Cascadia

Plays: 4 at player counts: 1 - 4

Appearance

The front of the box is very beautifully illustrated showing an elk with multiple different landscapes in the background and spot UV to make it really stand out. The back of the box shows a 3 player game in showing off all the games components and describing its theme. The tarot sized animal scoring cards are very beautiful and clearly illustrates the scoring with a picture and description. The screen printed animal tokens have a good weight to them and are nice to hold with different colours to make them easily identifiable even without the image. The drawstring bag these components come in is also excellent quality. The tiles are colourful thick cardboard and well finished with clear divides between land types. Each of these land types is again easy to identify based and colour and design. Overall, excellent quality components.

Gameplay

The aim of the game is to have the most victory points after each player has taken 20 turns. On a players turn they will draft a habitat tile and wildlife token with 4 pairs available to choose from. However if all 4 wildlife are the same type they are instantly removed and 4 more drawn from the bag to replace them. Before you choose a pair, if 3 of the wildlife are the type you may remove them and draw 3 to replace them from the bag. Instead of taking one of the available 4 pairs you may spend a nature token, to take any habitat tile and wildlife token from the 4 pairs or to replace the 4 wildlife tokens with 4 new ones. After you have drafted a pair you must place the habitat tile adjacent to a previously replaced tile in your area, matching terrain isn’t necessary but may cost you end game victory points. The wildlife token may be placed into your play area onto an empty habitat tile in your play area that has the matching wildlife symbol printed on it. If you place a wildlife onto a keystone tile (where only one animal can go) you gain a nature token. You may also not place the wildlife tile you drafted if you do not want to.

After 20 turns the game ends and final scoring takes place. You score points for each wildlife type based on the scoring cards that were dealt at the start of the game. This can include having large continuous sets of animals, isolated animals from one another or multiple different pairs. Each remaining nature token scores one point. Finally your habitat tiles score with you gaining one point per habitat tile on the largest contiguous group of each of the 5 types. Depending on player count you may also get 1-3 bonus points if you have the largest or second largest group in each habitat. The most points wins with ties broken by remaining nature tokens. The turns in this game are very short and easy to resolve and flow very naturally. The game plays 1 to 4 players and takes about 15 minutes per player.

Theme and Game Length

The games theme is very pasted on and overall it’s an abstract game. The scoring for each animal time makes sense with you wanting groups of salmon together, large groups of elk or isolated bears. The game scales very well with there always being 4 pairs of wildlife and habitat tiles to choose from. At 2 players you have more control of what tiles will be there your next round so you can plan ahead more, with the 4 player being a lot more tactical. I am happy to play it at all player counts in the future. The solo game plays like the 2 player game with the dummy player taking the rightmost set of tiles meaning you can plan what will be available and you can decide if you need to take a pair of tiles to prevent them from being taken away from you. There is also a family variant but I have not played this as the game is fairly simple to pick up and understand.

Strategy

There are 2 main point scoring opportunities in this game, animals and habitats. It’s impossible to score all animals well and you need to pick two to three to specialise in whilst dabbling in the others. One thing I have found is essential is to have nature tokens in case the perfect habitat and wildlife token come up but in different pairs. For this reason I think you need to be looking at getting some keystone tiles early in the game when there are still lots of each animal available to still draft. If you see other players going heavy into a type of animal early in the game, such as salmon, you should look to try to score other animals keeping your competition low especially at higher player counts. I have found foxes to be a lot less lucrative than the other animal types in my game so I haven’t really focused on them.

The habitats scoring is much easier to control with you always wanting to extend habitat groups where possible. Generally each player will have a large group of a one habitat in the first half of each game so you should pivot to ones that aren’t being built up to try and get some majority scoring from a smaller area. The tile and animal combinations may sometimes stop this though and you just need to take the best one of the two and place the other in an ok position. There has been no runaway leader in the games I have played with very different landscapes and animal combinations being fairly close scoring. Newer players can be competitive with experienced players with very simple easy to understand rules. The game has good replayability with each animal having 3 different scoring opportunities and the way the habitat and animal tiles come out each game will change each game a lot. The game ends after 20 turns and you can see the stack of tile depleting making it very easy to plan ahead for.

Accessibility

The game is light weight with very easy to understand rules and clear point scoring opportunities that are very easy to see. Your never feel overwhelmed with choices and the pace of the game only slows at the end when people are vying for majorities of landscapes. The game is exceptionally easy to teach and understand and could be taught to just about anyone even without the simpler family variant. The rulebook is well written, easy to understand with good clear examples. The animal scorings are also clearly explained in case there are any questions. The game doesn’t take up a lot of table space initially but you need to leave players room to grow in multiple directions. The setup and teardown time is very quick as well.

Final Thoughts

Cascadia is an excellent abstract family weight game. Typically I don’t enjoy these types of game as I find them boring and decisions to be very easy. However that’s not the case for this game, each turn there are difficult decisions and great depth with where I place my tile and wildlife. Scoring is simple to understand but difficult to fully optimise keeping me coming back for more. This has become my go to starter game for the night nowadays and everyone I have played it with has loved it. A game well worth playing with new and experienced gamers alike.

8/10

If you enjoyed this review please leave a thumbs up and also think out about checking out one of the 120+ reviews available on my blog (with pictures), Silver Duck Reviews, and subscribing to let you know when new reviews go live.