

Flightless Birds

Game Design Document

Report Content

Contents		
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Design Overview	3
3.	Design and Aesthetics	4
4.	Art	5
5.	Mechanics	7
6.	Story	9
7.	Technology	10

1. Introduction

You awake mysteriously on an abandoned ship, unsure as to how you got there. Navigate the corridors, search for clues and use your camera in order to find the keys to escape.

Your goal: RUN, SURVIVE & ESCAPE!

2. Overview

Details

Format:

Approx Runtime: 20-60 minutes

Target Audience: 8 yrs +

Target Purpose: Mathematical skills, Cooperation and Strategy

Genre: Competitive-Cooperative Family Game

Players: 3-4

Description

Flightless Birds is about four birds (a chicken, penguin, peacock and kiwi) who have crash landed, or possibly broken down in an abandoned city, depending on which dynamically changing map the players choose. They must rebuild a vehicle to escape, but only one of them can make it out.

Players each control one of the birds and must navigate the map to collect specific items which, when combined, allow the player to win the game.

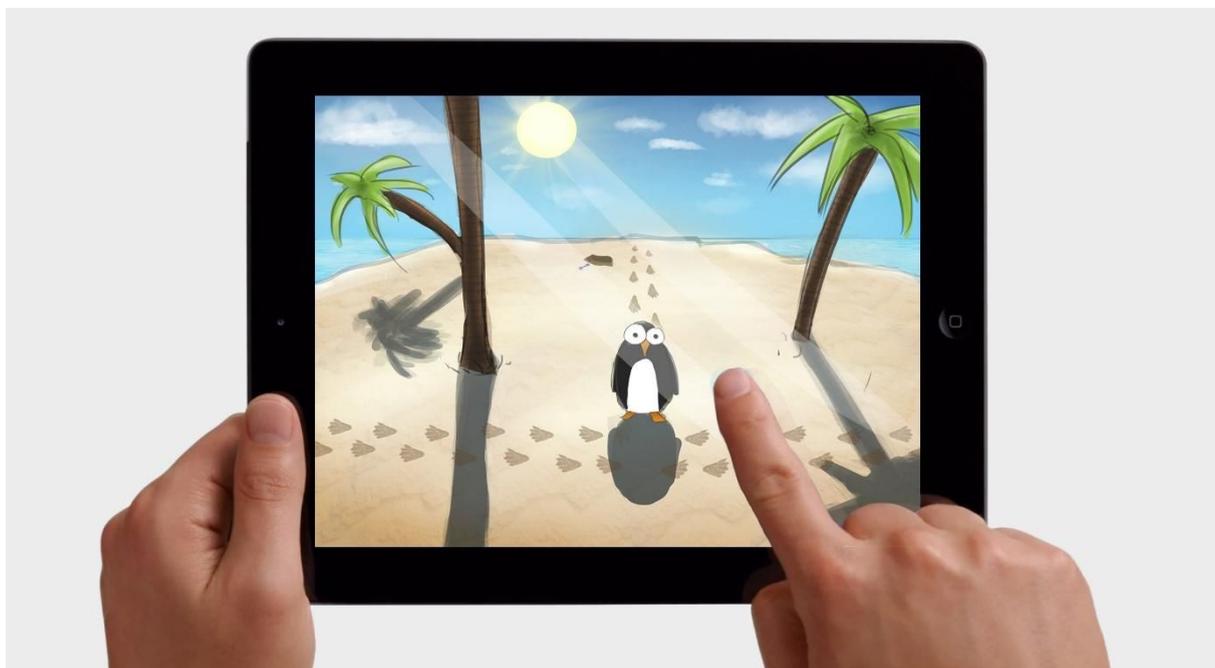
Players also have the option to 'team up' with other players which increases the amount of movement they can make in their turn, therefore creating faster gameplay. This generates a unique style of strategy encouraging co-operation until one player is close to winning, at which point they become the target of all other players.



3. Design and Aesthetics

The core inspirations for the design were *Pandemic* (Z-Man Games, 2008) and *Mario Party* (Hudson Soft, 1998), with some visual and story elements inspired by *Angry Birds* (Rovio Entertainment, 2009), as well as *Castle Crashers* (The Behemoth, 2008), *Cloudberry Kingdom* (The Behemoth, 2013) and *Battleblock Theater* (Pwnee Studios, 2013). As such, the various elements within *Flightless Birds* have been derived from these games and modified for two purposes: To be accessible to a younger audience and to create faster, streamlined gameplay.

The visual aesthetics are focused to fit the light hearted and childish story of four birds needing to build their own plane to fly to safety; as they are incapable of flight themselves. Solid, bright colours and a cartoon style are employed, each bird and their animations have a distinctly 'cute and clueless' look, and the imagery and description of all the items have a tongue-in-cheek element.

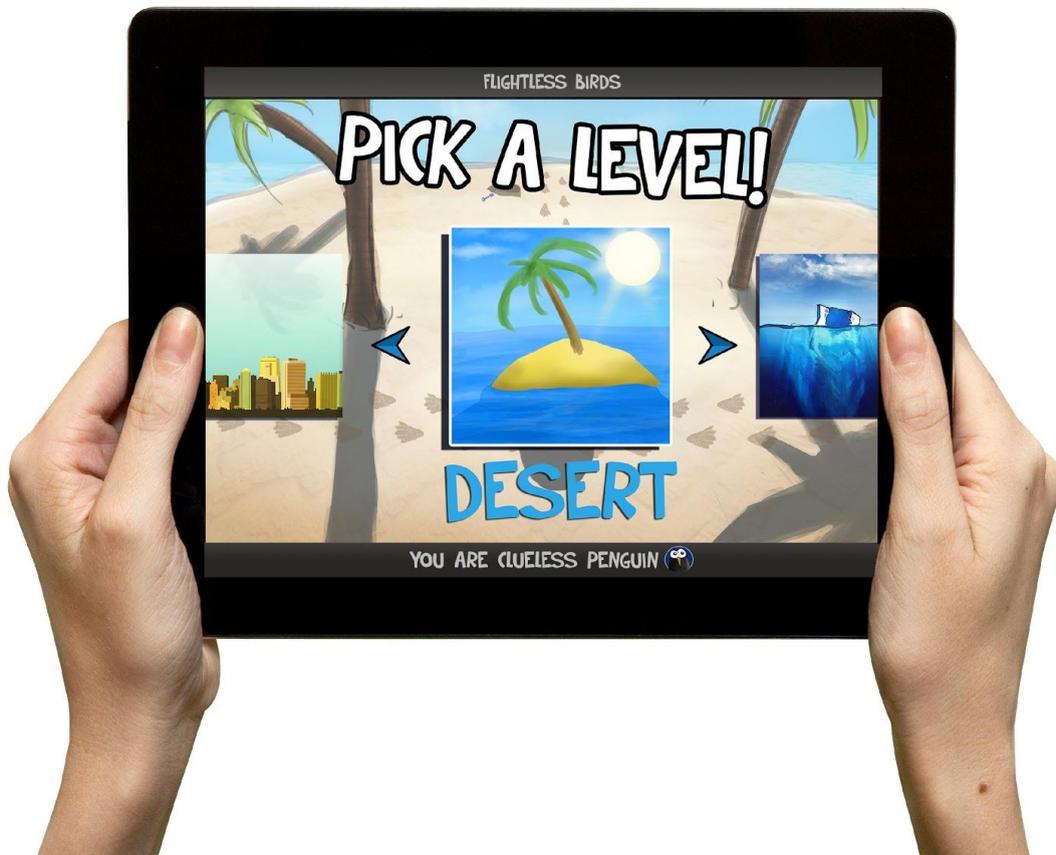


4. Art

The visual aesthetics are focused to fit the light hearted and childish story of four birds needing to build their own plane to fly to safety; as they are incapable of flight themselves. Solid, bright colours and a cartoon style are employed, each character has a distinctly 'cute and clueless' look, and all the items have a tongue-in-cheek element.



Character Select Screen



Map Select Screen

5. Mechanics

There are two domains where the mechanics deal with and mix together: Player Interactions and Map Interactions.

5.1. Player Interactions:

Actions

Each player controls a flightless bird, they have six 'Action Points' (AP) per turn which can be used to execute various actions. To select an action, players must tap their character, which will bring up a list of available actions and show the number of AP remaining. Some actions will cost more AP than others. This simple system encourages players to use their mathematical skills, a good exercise for younger players.

Teaming Up

There is a mechanic to form a team with other players (whose characters share the same space as theirs) allowing an increase in available AP, +4 for each player. All four players could team up, granting a total of 18 AP for a turn. Players must send team invites at the start of their turn, at this stage, the other players can either accept or refuse to team up. The player who initiates the team becomes the Team Leader, encouraging meta gameplay between the players making decisions or being forced along. The Team Leader has the advantage of receiving items stolen from players outside the team, and also for choosing where to move. Other players must move with them.

Stealing and Antagonising

There are actions available to stunt player's movements or steal items from them. Throwing Snow and Throwing Junk require a player to have the Snow or Junk in their inventory. A player can also steal from another player, granted their characters are on the same space and the player has 4 AP available for the action.

Social Interactions

All the listed elements cause players to engage with one another or at least consider where the other players are, and what they are doing. Alliances are informally made and broken, possibly often, and unprompted. Given the lighthearted aesthetic of the game, there is an environment which can encourage players to explore the consequences of their actions with other players in this game.

5.2. Map Interactions

A Dynamic Map

Depending on which map the players chose, there are various ways the map can hinder their progress, as an example, on the Arctic Map:

The lower corner of the screen has five rings (three dark, two light) and the circular Tide Indicator. At the end of each round, the indicator moves up, indicating one of two stages of the tide.

Dark circles indicate Low Tide, where players can access the red spaces on the outer areas of the board.

The Light circles indicate High Tide, in which the red spaces on the outer areas are off limits during this phase. At the end of five rounds the indicator resets back to the first step on the Low Tide.

Regardless of tide, Ice Blocks can be placed on certain spaces to enable pathways of movement, these interact with the tides where, upon reaching Low Tide, the blocks are washed away. Any players on an Ice Block when Low Tide first occurs also washes away and resets to a new spawn point.

Washing Away

This mechanic is one of the heavier elements of the game where players would consider it an undesirable outcome. Players that are 'Washed Away' lose their inventory and restart at a start point, chosen at random.

There are various ways that a player can be washed away:

- The first occurrence of High Tide when in a Low Tide location.
- The first occurrence of Low Tide when standing on an Ice Block.
- Activating a "Ka-Pow!" Trap.

Nests

As players use bird characters, they are therefore are required to claim one of four Nest spaces as a necessary step towards winning the game. To do so, a player must be on the same space as a Nest and use the action 'Claim Nest'. The Nest then changes colour to represent which player has claimed it.

The Nest operates as a storage location for the player, effectively becoming a secondary inventory, and can be stolen from. Traps can be put in the nest to fight against people attempting to steal. As a step to winning the game, the player must store in their nest two Plane Part items and one Engine or Old Engine, then choose to Build a Plane (an action which can only be executed on a Nest space). This alerts other players to the fact that player now has a plane and will be racing for the finish.

6. Story

Flightless Birds is about four birds without the ability to fly, who crash-land their plane a deserted setting, such as a tropical island, an abandoned city, the middle of the desert or an arctic island. Other planes have crashed here before, and so the birds must scavenge the parts to build a brand new plane and be the first one off the island.

Birds tend to also be somewhat shy creatures, to which the teaming up mechanic enables teams to be created from one person to another, without the obligation of reciprocating an invitation to continue teaming up.



7. Technology

Flightless Birds is designed to be played on an iPad, although there is the possibility of porting to other tablets/mobile devices. A PC or Console version is also an option in the future.

iPads were chosen to be the primary platform because it is already a very kid-friendly platform, and many children use iPads to play games. This does, however, cause some problems, as there is a lot of competition on iPad. However, we feel that *Flightless Birds* is different enough to stand out from the crowd. There aren't many social/party games on the iPad based on both cooperative and competitive play. Certainly none that are highly popular, this presents a niche waiting to be filled by an innovative and exciting game, such as *Flightless Birds*.