

Meadow Madness: Design Document

Overview

Meadow Madness is an action/puzzle game where the user attempts to help meadow-dwelling creatures get from one side of the screen to the other without being eaten by other meadow-dwelling creatures.

The game takes place in a meadow which is divided into four parallel, horizontally arranged streams, which are separated by rows of reeds and cattails. When the game begins, meadow creatures, which are introduced at random intervals, make their way from one side of the screen to the other, traveling horizontally in one of the four streams on the screen. The creatures travel in both directions, so some creatures may begin on the right side of the screen and head left, while others may begin on the left side of the screen and head right.

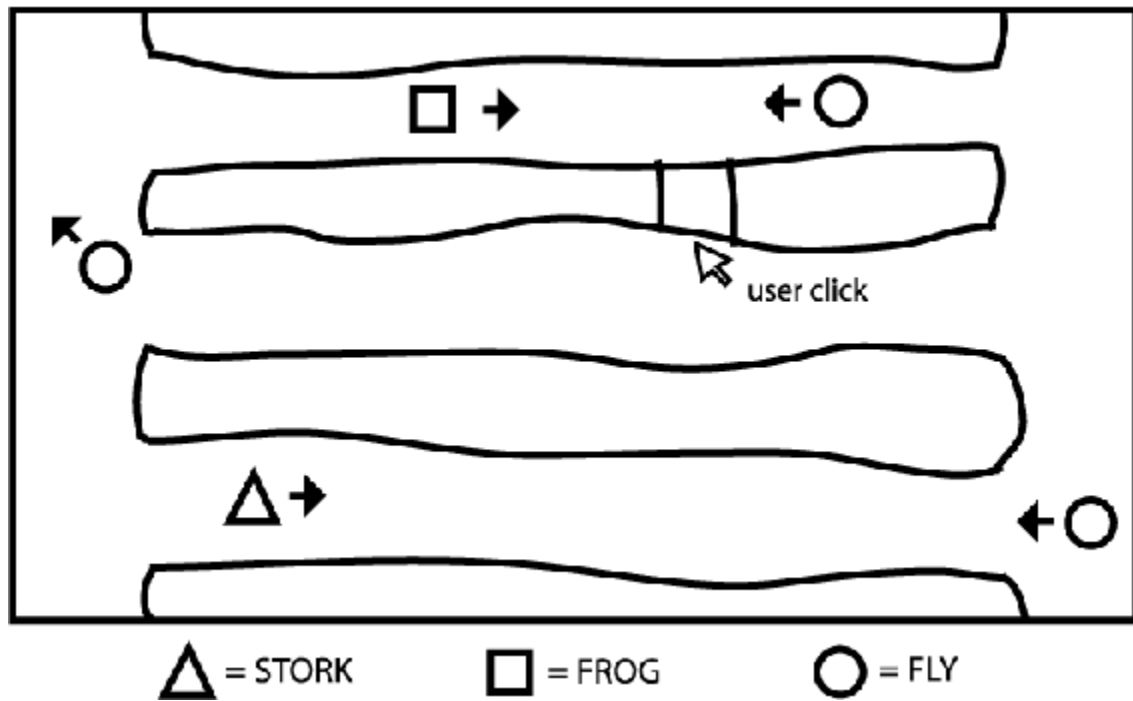
When two meadow creatures traveling in opposite directions on the same stream meet each other, one creature may eat the other or they may pass each other peacefully, depending on what kind of creatures they meet. The player's goal is twofold. The primary objective is to avoid creatures eating other creatures, that is, to have creatures exit the screen without being eaten. The secondary goal is to have as many creatures as possible exit the screen on the opposite side from where they entered. The player can affect the movement of the creatures in two ways. They can create paths in the reeds to allow the creatures to pass from one stream to another, as well as reverse the directions of the creatures.

The player will have a given amount of "lives" in the game. These "lives" represent the amount of eaten creatures are allowed before the game ends. The game is level based, so if the player successfully completes the level before running out of lives, the player advances to the next level. The player's score will increase with each creature successfully navigated to the opposite side of the screen from where they came. The player's score will decrease when a creature is returned to the side it came from.

Game Interaction

The interaction in Meadow Madness is simple. As stated earlier, in order to have the

creatures pass from one side of the screen to the other without eating each other, the player can create paths through the reeds to allow the creatures to pass from one stream to another. The player can achieve this by simply clicking on the reeds where he or she desires the path to appear. When the player makes a path in the reeds from one stream to the other, the next creature that passes the path, in either one of the streams that the path connects, will take the path to the other stream. Only one creature may pass through any given path. After a creature passes through a path and changes stream, the path immediately closes, allowing no other creatures to pass through it.



The player can also reverse the direction of a creature. The player can do this simply by clicking on that creature. The creature will then turn red and reverse directions. The creature will stay red until it is clicked again and is turned to its correct direction. If the creature reaches the side of the screen from which it started, the creature will leave the stream, and points will be deducted from the players score, but no loss of life will be incurred.

Game Elements

There are four different kinds of creatures that the player will encounter in Meadow Madness. The relationships of these creatures are crucial to the game play.

Storks

Storks are one type of meadow-dwelling creature that pass from one side of the screen to the other during the game. Storks will eat frogs if they pass each other in the same stream.

Frogs

Frogs are also one type of meadow-dwelling creature that pass from one side of the screen to the other during the game. Frogs will eat flies if they pass each other in the same stream.

Flies

Flies are another type of the meadow-dwelling creatures that pass from one side of the screen to the other during the game. Flies will not eat any other creature.

Alligators

Alligators are another type of creature in the meadow. Alligators are different from the other creatures. Alligators eat storks, frogs and flies. When an alligator eats a creature, it doesn't count as a loss of a life. If an alligator eats one of each creature as it travels from one side of the screen to the other, the player will receive an extra life. An alligator's direction can not be reversed.

The following is a chart of the relationships between the meadow creatures. This diagram shows the relationship of all the creatures, and which creature eats when two creatures run into each other on the same stream.

	STORK	FROG	FLY	GATOR
STORK	nothing	stork	nothing	gator
FROG	stork	nothing	frog	gator
FLY	nothing	frog	nothing	gator
GATOR	gator	gator	gator	nothing

Game Play

The game play in Meadow Madness is essentially defined by the game's interaction and the relationships between the elements. However, there are a few other details that should be touched on to fully explain the game.

When the player begins play, different meadow creatures will appear on either side of the screen, approaching a given river, seen in the diagram following. It should be understood that there is an initial “safe zone” where the creature first appears on the screen. When a creature first appears on the screen, the creature will inhabit this “safe zone” for a short amount of time, as it approaches the stream it will attempt to cross. In this safe zone, the creature can not be eaten by any other creature, or eat any other creature. In the following diagram, the fly on the left side of the screen is in the “safe zone” while approaching the bottom river.

The “safe zone” also comes into play when a creature reaches either the end or beginning of the stream. When this occurs, the creature will also enter the safe zone and will “scurry” off at a diagonal, as to indicate that it is no longer an part of the active playing field. This can be seen in the following diagram, where the fly on the left side of the screen is leaving the field at a diagonal. If the creature is red when this occurs (it is returning to its original side), points will be deducted from the player's score. If the creature is black and has successfully made it from one side of the screen to the other, points will be added to the players score.

As the player progresses to later levels in the game, creatures will start appearing more rapidly and will start to travel faster.