Darwin's Choice - Rules

For 2-6 players, ages 10+, 60-120 minutes

After millions of years of wasteland on Earth, animal life is finally emerging. But the world is still forming and undergoing a constant change. Only those species able to adapt to the ever-changing conditions will survive to leave their mark in history. Here is your chance! Do your best to become Darwin's Choice.

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

- Charles Darwin, founder of modern evolutionary biology -

Contents

237 Animal Cards

135 small Animal Cards (heads, wings, single legs and tails) and 102 large Animal Cards (bodies and double legs)

22 Biome Cards
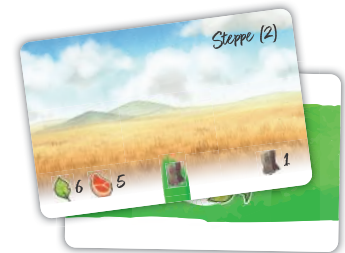
16 Event Cards

5 Continental Cards

12 Overview Cards

6 Competition Chips

5 Continental Chips

101 Darwin Points

1 First Player Marker

62 Food Chips

40 Food Chips with a value of 1 (one leaf = one unit of plants; one steak = one unit of meat), 16 chips with a value of 2 and 6 chips with a value of 3

54 Player Markers

6 colors, 9 pieces each

Explanation of Symbols

Nutrition Symbols

These symbols indicate the diet of an animal species and are only found on the Head Cards.

Herbivore

Carnivore

Omnivore

Ability Symbols

These symbols indicate the abilities an animal species has and the strength of these abilities.

Running

Flying

Climbing

Swimming

Cold Resistance

Heat Resistance

Special Ability Symbols

A species with a Special Ability Symbol on one of their cards is protected from predators.
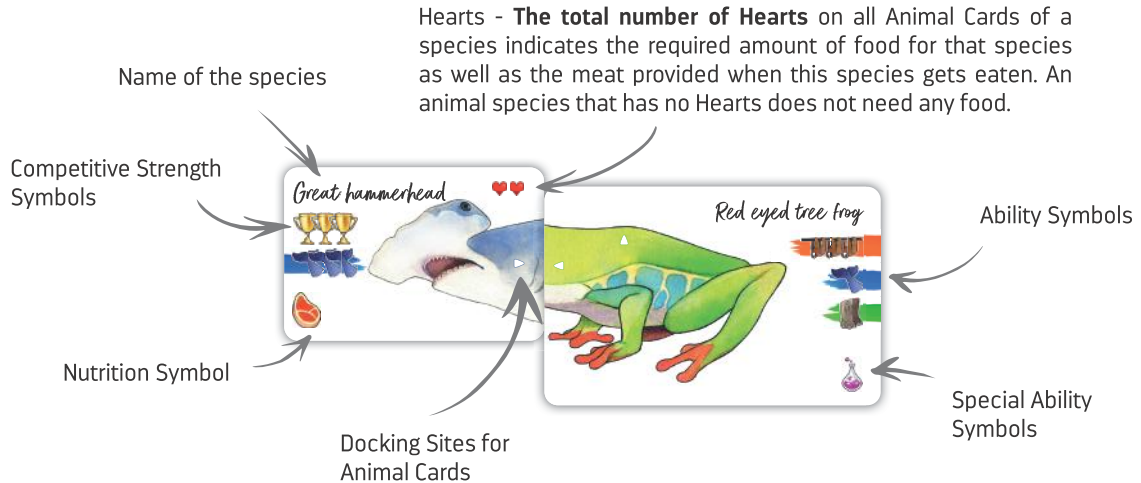
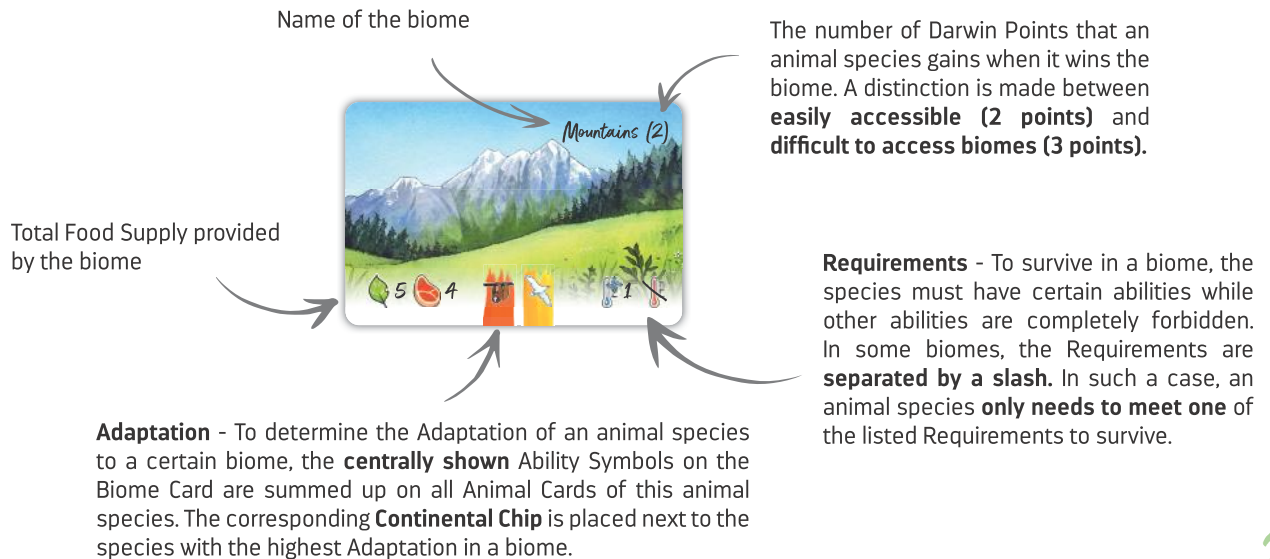Digging

Poisonous

Competitive Strength Symbol

The Competitive Strength summarizes muscle mass, intelligence, sensory perception, attack and defense attributes of an animal species.

Explanation of Cards

Animal Cards

Name of the species

Hearts - **The total number of Hearts** on all Animal Cards of a species indicates the required amount of food for that species as well as the meat provided when this species gets eaten. An animal species that has no Hearts does not need any food.

Competitive Strength Symbols

Great hammerhead

Red eyed tree frog

Ability Symbols

Nutrition Symbol

Special Ability Symbols

Docking Sites for Animal Cards

Biome Cards

Name of the biome

The number of Darwin Points that an animal species gains when it wins the biome. A distinction is made between **easily accessible (2 points)** and **difficult to access biomes (3 points).**

Mountains (2)

Total Food Supply provided by the biome

Requirements - To survive in a biome, the species must have certain abilities while other abilities are completely forbidden. In some biomes, the Requirements are **separated by a slash.** In such a case, an animal species **only needs to meet one** of the listed Requirements to survive.

Adaptation - To determine the Adaptation of an animal species to a certain biome, the **centrally shown** Ability Symbols on the Biome Card are summed up on all Animal Cards of this animal species. The corresponding **Continental Chip** is placed next to the species with the highest Adaptation in a biome.

Game Preparation

The game preparation/rule explanation refers to the base game with 3-6 players. Rule adjustments for the Two-player Version, the Child-friendly Rules (7+) and the 2 vs. 2 Co-op Version are explained in the chapter 'Game versions'.

1 One player is appointed as the Game Master. At the end of each Era, the Game Master will moderate the Evaluation and Transition Phases.

2 Each player receives all the Player Markers of one certain color along with three Overview Cards. (With 5-6 players, two players each share one set of Overview Cards)

3 Shuffled stacks of cards (large Animal Cards, small Animal Cards, Event Cards, Continental Cards and Biome Cards) are placed in the middle of the gameplay area.

4 All Food and Competition Chips, as well as the Darwin Points, are sorted and placed nearby.

5 The number of face-up Biome Cards used depends on the number of players. **With 3-4 players, use 4 Biome Cards. With 5-6 players, use 5 Biome Cards.** The Biome Cards are placed on the left and on the right of the centrally-placed card stacks.

6 A Continental Chip is placed above each Biome Card. In a game with 3-4 players, 1 Continental Card and the corresponding Continental Chip are not played.

7 The quantities of food depicted on the Biome Cards are placed above each card with the corresponding value of Food Chips.

8 A Trade Zone is set up, which consists of **'Number of players + 2'** Animal Cards (large and small Animal Cards in a 50:50 ratio). If the number of Animal Cards is odd, more small Animal Cards are drawn than large ones.

9 Each player takes 10 Animal Cards as their starting hand. Cards are drawn individually and can be viewed immediately. Players are free to choose whether to take the cards consecutively, alternately or simultaneously. The hand may be freely assembled from the two stacks of Animal Cards. However, since both heads and bodies are necessary to create new animal species, players should always make sure to take cards from both stacks.

10 The Game Master receives the First Player Marker and starts the game.

Gameplay

The game is played counter-clockwise and runs over 4 rounds, which are called Eras. Each Era contains 3 phases:

I. Action Phase: In the Action Phase, new animal species are created, mutated or moved to other biomes.

II. Evaluation Phase: In the Evaluation Phase, it is determined which species become extinct, which can eat, and which are eaten. The more successful a species is at this fight for survival, the more Darwin Points it receives.

III. Transition Phase: In the Transition Phase, Event Cards and new Biome Cards are drawn, so this phase will decisively shape the coming Era.

I. Action Phase

In the Action Phase the players can choose between **2 Additional Actions** (Card Redrawing, Trading) and **3 Main Actions** (Create, Mutate and Migrate).

During each turn, each player performs one Main Action. In addition, they may optionally choose to perform one or both Additional Actions.

If a player is **unable or unwilling to perform a Main Action** on their turn, they pass on this Era and can no longer perform any action during this Era (including Additional Actions). Once **each player has passed, the Action Phase ends**.

Additional Actions

1. Card Redrawing

At the beginning of each Era, the players can decide whether to keep their 10 Animal Cards or to **discard all but one**, and **draw 9 new cards.**

This Additional Action may only be performed by a player **once per Era** and is only possible if the player has not yet performed any other action. Their cards must be unchanged.

Players can discard their Animal Cards during the turn of another player, i.e. they do not have to wait for their first turn.

If a player is unable to create any animal species **in the first Era**, they can discard all their Animal Cards and draw them again. However, **all 10 cards must be discarded.** The affected player may repeat this process until they can create at least one animal species.

Note: Redrawing cards should always be considered carefully, as this could also worsen the situation.

2. Trading

During their turn, each player can trade one **Animal Card** with the Trade Zone.

For this, the player places one of the cards from their hand into the Trade Zone and picks up an Animal Card **of any size or type** in exchange.

Until the end of their turn players may change their mind, i.e. cancel the trade, take another card instead or place another card into the Trade Zone. Once players have declared their turn as finished, this is no longer possible.

Any of the players who have **not yet passed** and thus remain active in the Era can trade.

The Trade Zone is renewed during the Transition Phase of each Era and equipped with new Animal Cards.
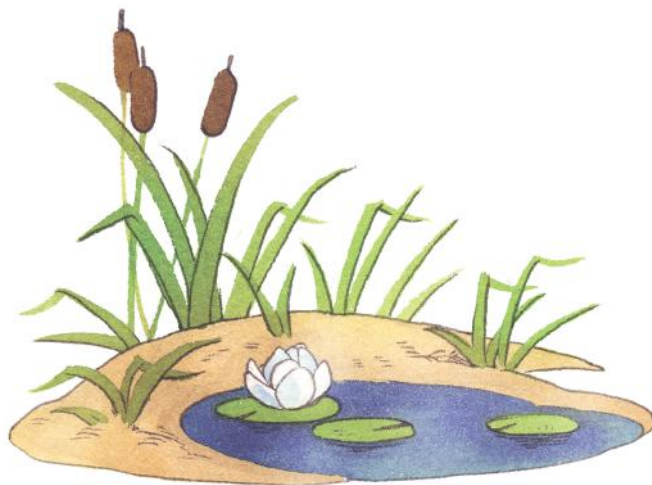
Main Actions

During each turn a player may perform one Main Action.

One Main Action may be carried out per animal species in each Era. An animal may be created, mutated or migrated to another biome.

Note: To indicate that a species has already performed a Main Action in an Era, after a Main Action, the Player Marker placed on the species is turned to the check-marked side.


1. Create

To create an animal species, place it **in one of the available biomes.** The food obtained by the species is placed next to the Head Card in the form of Food Chips. The Food Chips are **first taken from the supply** above the Biome Card. If the supply is empty, the Food Chips from the animal species of the same biome **with a lower Adaptation** are taken.

Animal species may only be placed in biomes in which they can currently obtain **enough food for themselves and meet the biome Requirements.** For carnivores, herbivores and omnivores also count as a potential food source.

Each species must have **a head and a body.**
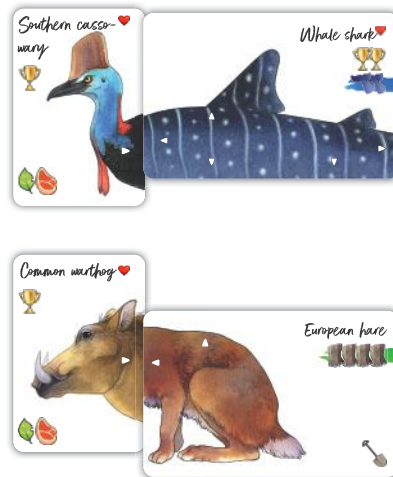
The Body Card with its Docking Sites and their position defines how many Animal Cards an animal species can consist of and which body parts can be added.
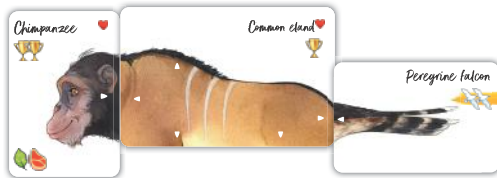
An animal species consists, **at most, of a head, a body, two pairs of legs, a wing and a tail.**

All names shown on the Animal Cards of a species must be **aligned horizontally.**

Animal species **do not need to be completed,** meaning that Docking Sites may remain free when laying out an animal species.

An animal species is always fully laid out by a player during one turn, **never over several turns.**

To identify a species as theirs, players place **one of their Player Markers, check-marked side up**, on each of their newly created animal species.

Example – Creating a new animal species

It's Christina's turn and she places a winged Bongo chimpanzee in the Tropical rainforest biome. The Requirements of the biome are easily fulfilled by this species, with its multitude of climbing, running and flying symbols. Next to the Bongo Head Card, a Food Chip with 3 units of plants (= 3 leaves) is placed, because the Head Card has an herbivore symbol and the Animal Cards have a total of 3 hearts. In addition, the Continental Chip belonging to the biome is placed next to this new species because now it is the most adapted animal species in this biome, with an Adaptation of 8 (4 climbing symbols, 2 running symbols and 2 flying symbols). Finally, Christina places her Player Marker with the check mark facing upwards on her new species.

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2. Mutation

To mutate an animal species, the player performs **1 or a maximum of 2 Mutations on an animal species of their own.** There are **3 types** of Mutations:

1. **Remove:** An Animal Card is removed from a species without replacement.

2. **Add:** An Animal Card is placed at an unoccupied Docking Site.

3. **Replace:** An Animal Card is replaced with an already placed, similar Animal Card, e.g. Head Card for Head Card.

Note: The replacement of a Body Card is only allowed if a new Body Card has suitable Docking Sites for all its already placed body parts (legs and tail).

Animal Cards that are removed from an animal species by a Mutation (Remove or Replace) **are discarded.**

If a player performs 2 Mutations on one of their animal species during the same turn, it is called a **Double Mutation.**

For a Double Mutation one must **pay up to 3 Darwin Points** which have been placed on the species. Species with 3 or more Darwin points placed on them pay 3 Darwin Points for a Double Mutation. Species with less than 3 Darwin Points pay all their Darwin Points.

Double Mutations are carried out like Single Mutations, **in one turn.**

After a Single or Double Mutation, an animal species must be able to obtain **enough food for themselves and meet the biome Requirements.**

Example - Mutation

Christina mutates the legs of her winged Bongo chimpanzee. She replaces the Chimpanzee legs with Blue-footed booby legs. In addition, she puts Great white pelican legs on the now free Docking Site. For this Double Mutation, Christina must pay the 3 Darwin Points placed on the animal species. Due to this Double Mutation, this species now needs only two units of plants. Finally, the Player Marker is turned to the check-marked side.

3. Migrate

When migrating, players move one of their species from its original biome **to any other existing biome.** Food and Continental Chips belonging to the animal species remain in the original biome and **are not moved** along with it.

Animal species may only be moved to biomes in which they are currently able **to obtain enough food for themselves and meet the biome Requirements.**

II. Evaluation Phase

The Evaluation Phase is divided into 5 steps and moderated by the Game Master.

1. Checking the Requirements

In this step, the players check which animal species meet the Requirements of the biomes. Species that do not meet the Requirements of their biome will die out immediately.

When a species dies out, regardless of the cause (i.e. not meeting the Requirements, starvation, being eaten or an Event Card effect), its Animal Cards are distributed to the corresponding discard piles. The player gets back their Player Marker and additionally **1 Darwin Point** if the animal species had **one or more** Darwin Points on it at the time. The player puts this Darwin Point in front of themselves; it can no longer be lost. **However, the remaining Darwin Points are lost** and return to the stock.

2. Food Evaluation

During this step, the players evaluate which species can eat, which get eaten and which die out.

The evaluation of herbivores and omnivores takes place before that of carnivores.

Herbivores that have **enough Food Chips** next to them survive. The herbivores that have not been able to obtain enough units of plants for themselves become extinct and are discarded.

Omnivores that have **enough Food Chips** next to them survive. The omnivores that have not been able to obtain enough units of plants and/or meat for themselves become extinct and are discarded.

Carnivores that have **enough Food Chips** next to them survive. If there are not enough units of meat next to a carnivore, the player must check whether the carnivore can eat **one or more of the surviving herbivores or omnivores** to cover its required amount of food.

If a carnivore cannot compensate the missing amount of food by eating herbivores or omnivores, **it dies out and with it, all the animal species already eaten by it.** All carnivores in this biome with a lower Adaptation automatically also die out.

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Explanation of Nutrition

The diet of an animal species is defined by the **Nutrition Symbol** on its Head Card. A distinction is made between herbivores, carnivores and omnivores.

The amount of food required by an animal species corresponds to **the sum of all Hearts shown on its Animal Cards.** At the same time, this number also indicates the amount of food obtained from eating this species.

The Adaptation of the animal species to their biome determines **the order in which food is distributed.** The Food Distribution in the biomes is an ongoing process, so the distribution of Food Chips is adjusted after each player's Main Action (if necessary).

If the Food Distribution in a biome changes in such a way that an animal species can no longer obtain enough food for itself, the remaining Food Chips belonging to it are no longer placed next to the head but next to the tail.

The **final decision** as to whether a species was able to obtain enough food for itself in the past Era is determined in the step **'Food Evaluation' of the Evaluation Phase.**

Herbivore

In all biomes, **the most adapted Herbivore** gets to eat first. After the most adapted herbivore the second most adapted herbivore eats their share, then the third most adapted, and so on, until an animal species can no longer obtain enough food for itself and therefore dies out.

In case of a **tie**, the greater **Competitive Strength** and secondly, the greater amount of **food required** is decisive. If all these factors are the same, both herbivores eat simultaneously, which can lead to both animal species being unable to obtain enough food for themselves.

Carnivore

The Food Distribution of the carnivores **is the same as that of the herbivores**, i.e. the Adaptation determines the order. Again, if the Adaptation is equal, the Competitive Strength and the amount of food required are compared.

The carnivores that obtain too little or no food still have the chance to eat **one or more of the surviving herbivores and omnivores.** Completely or partially eaten species die out and are removed from the game. **The remaining meat of partially eaten species is lost** and not free for other carnivores.

The process of eating another animal species takes place in the step 'Food Evaluation' of the Evaluation Phase.

For a carnivore to eat an herbivore or an omnivore, it must have **at least the same or a higher Adaptation and Competitive Strength** as the targeted herbivore/omnivore. In addition, the target must not have the special ability 'Poisonous' or 'Digging', as these are an absolute protection against predators.

Carnivores **cannot choose their targets.** All possible targets are considered, thus **only the least adapted edible species are eaten.** Therefore, one species of a player may also eat another of that player's species. Only if there is a tie between two targets (i.e. Adaptation, Competitive Strength and number of Hearts are equal), then the player can decide which species gets eaten.

Omnivore

Omnivores **basically eat plants** and are regarded as herbivores. If an omnivore cannot obtain enough or any unit of plants for itself, **it additionally participates in the Food Distribution of the carnivores.** Thus, an omnivore can also eat a combination of plants and meat. But omnivores cannot eat other species.

Example - Food Distribution/Evaluation

In the Coast biome, the Food Supply is sufficient for the survival of both species living in this biome: The Winged bongo (6 Adaptation, needs 2 units of plants) and the Puffin tuna (9 Adaptation, needs 2 units of meat).

In the High mountains biome, the Bison lion tamarin (4 Adaptation, needs 2 units of plants) eats before the Macaw marmot (3 Adaptation, needs 1 unit of plants). Since the biome provides 3 units of plants, both species have enough food for themselves.

The Orca tortoise (6 Adaptation) is the only carnivore in the High mountains biome and needs 4 units of meat. However, since the biome provides only 3 units, it must be determined whether the Orca tortoise can eat one of the laid out herbivores. The Macaw marmot (which is the least adapted species of this biome) is protected by the special ability 'Digging' and cannot be eaten. The Bison lion tamarin does not have such protection. This species can be eaten and is removed from the game because it is less adapted and at the same time less competitive than the Orca tortoise. By eating the Bison lion tamarin (with 2 Heart symbols), the Orca tortoise receives 2 additional units of meat and can thus obtain a total of 5 units of meat for itself in this Era, which is more than enough food to survive.

Dies out and is therefore discarded

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3. Survival

Each animal species that is still in the game after the step 'Food Evaluation' receives **1 Darwin Point.**

Darwin Points are always assigned to an animal species and are therefore placed on the Animal Cards.

4. Adaptation

In each biome, the most adapted species is rewarded.

Note: The Continental Chip should always be assigned to the most adapted species. If this is done, the winner of each biome is now known at a glance.

All species with the highest Adaptation in their biome receive **the number of Darwin Points shown in the upper right corner** of the Biome Card

In case of a tie, the Competitive Strengths are compared. If these are also equal, the **amount of required food** is considered (higher number of Hearts wins). If two species have the same values, then there are two winners of that biome and both species receive the shown number of Darwin Points.

A species with **0 Adaptation never gets Darwin Points** in this step.

5. Competitive Strength

Across all biomes, 3 animal species with the highest Competitive Strength are determined.

Place the golden Competition Chip next to the number one most competitive animal species, the silver Competition Chip next to the second most competitive animal species, and the bronze chip next to the third most competitive animal species.

First place gets 3 Darwin Points, second place gets 2 Darwin Points, and third place gets 1 Darwin Point.

In case of a tie, the Adaptation to the biome in which the animal species lives, and then **the amount of food obtained**, is decisive (higher number of Hearts wins). If these are also equal, then there will be two species with the same rank, and both receive the full number of points. An equal Competition Chip is placed next to both. However, this has no effect on the other ranks, e.g. in the case of two first places, a second place and a third place will still be awarded.

A species with **0 Competitive Strength never gets Darwin Points** in this step.

Example – Darwin Point Distribution

All laid out animal species have survived the Era and receive 1 Darwin Point. With an Adaptation of 9, the Puffin tuna claims the Coast biome for itself and receives 2 Darwin Points. The Orca tortoise with an Adaption of 6 wins the High mountains biome for itself and receives 3 Darwin Points. With 9 Competitive Strength the Orca tortoise is also in first place in the evaluation of Competitive Strength and thus receives 3 additional Darwin Points. The Winged bongo is second with 4 Competitive Strength symbols (2 Darwin Points) and the Puffin tuna with 1 Competitive Strength Symbol is third (1 Darwin Point). According to this point distribution, the Macaw marmot now has 1 Darwin Point (1+0+0), the Winged bongo 3 points (1+0+2), the Puffin tuna 4 points (1+2+1) and the Orca tortoise 7 points (1+3+3).

III. Transition Phase

The new Era is prepared in the Transition Phase. It is divided into 7 short steps, which are moderated by the Game Master.

1 Event Cards

The Event Card of the last Era is put on the discard pile.

A new Event Card is revealed, placed face-up on the Event Card stack, and its effect is activated.

Event Cards with an Instant Effect are dealt with immediately, while Event Cards with a Permanent Effect impact the entire upcoming Era.

 Instant Effect   Permanent Effect

When the Event Card refers to a single biome, the affected biome is **determined by drawing a Continental Card.** The drawn Continental Card **is then placed briefly (until the Biome Change has been performed) on the side.**

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2 Biome Change

A defined number of Biome Cards is drawn from the biome stack and assigned to their places **with the same number of Continental Cards.** For example, if the Continental Card 'Africa' is drawn, the Biome with the Continental Chip 'Africa' is replaced. The replaced biomes are discarded.

The number of changed biomes depends on the Era and the number of players:

With 3-4 players, 2 biomes are replaced after the first Era, and after the second and third Era 3 biomes **(2/3/3)**.

With 5-6 players, 3 biomes are replaced after the first Era, and after the second and third Era 4 biomes **(3/4/4).**

After the Biome Change, all the Continental Cards are shuffled and placed back to the middle of the table.

3 Food Redistribution

Food Supply in the form of Food Chips is adjusted to the new conditions (i.e. change-of-biomes and Event Card effects) and **distributed to the existing animal species according to their Adaptation.**

No Food Chips are placed beside animal species that **do not meet** the Requirements of the new biomes. In biomes in which no animal species meets the new Requirements, the Continental Chip is temporarily placed above the Biome Card until a species meets the Requirements.

4 Player Markers

All Player Markers are turned to the **side without a check mark.**

5 Renewing Trade Zone

The Animal Cards in the Trade Zone are discarded and replaced by new Animal Cards (large and small Animal Cards, again in a ratio of 1:1).

6 Replenishing the Hand

Each player replenishes their hand up to 10 cards, the un-played Animal Cards from the previous Era are not discarded.

If an Animal Card stack is exhausted at any point in the game, the discard pile is shuffled and becomes the new drawing stack.

7 New First Player

The First Player Marker moves counter-clockwise.

End of the Game

The game ends after the Evaluation Phase of the fourth and last Era. Each player sums up all the Darwin Points obtained by their species, i.e. all the Darwin Points on their species and the individual points received from extinct species. The player with the most Darwin Points wins and earns the title of 'Darwin's Choice'. If there is a tie, there are several winners.

Event Cards

Instant Effect
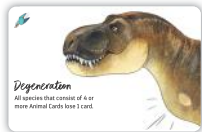
Degeneration – That which is not needed recedes. A card is removed from each animal species consisting of 4 or more Animal Cards and placed on the discard pile. Players can decide for themselves which Animal Card is removed from their animal species. Head and Body Cards, however, can never be removed.

Desertification – It's hot; deserts are spreading. A Desert or Stone desert is selected from the Biome Card stack (or discard pile) to replace a randomly drawn Biome Card during the upcoming Biome Change (e.g. instead of replacing 3 random Biome Cards, only 2 random Biome Cards are replaced in addition to the already selected desert). Already-existing Deserts or Stone deserts are protected from the Biome Change once. If both biomes (the Desert and Stone desert) are already on the table, these biomes are protected from the Biome Change once and no further desert is substituted.

Flood - The Earth is under water. All species without the ability to swim, climb or fly die out immediately.

Hurricane - An epic storm rushes across the Earth. In every biome, the least adapted species dies out immediately. Species with an Adaptation to their biome of 4 and higher are protected from this event. In biomes that only contain animal species with an Adaptation of 4 and higher, no animal species die out.

Ice age - The Earth has cooled down enormously; it's the Ice age. A Polar desert or Cold desert is selected from the Biome Card stack (or discard pile) to replace a randomly drawn Biome Card during the upcoming Biome Change (same procedure as for 'Desertification').

Intruders - An invasive new species is spreading rapidly across the Earth. This leads to an unprecedented mass extinction. Each player loses the species with the most Darwin Points. The Darwin Points on this animal species are not lost, however, but distributed freely by each player among their still existing animal species. If a player has several successful animal species with the same number of Darwin Points, they are free to choose which species will become extinct. Players who no longer have any species after the extinction of their most successful species may keep the released Darwin Points.

Mountain formation - The collision of two tectonic plates forms a mountain that reaches to the skies. A High mountains biome or a Highlands biome is selected from the stack of Biome Cards (or discard pile) to replace a randomly drawn Biome Card during the upcoming Biome Change (same procedure as for 'Desertification').

Rotation axis shift - The Earth's axis has shifted and the climate goes haywire. All biomes must change during the upcoming Biome Change.

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Permanent Effect

Continental drift - The tectonic plates on which the animal species are located drift apart. For this Era, no Migrations are possible between the left and right side of the table which are separated through the centrally placed card stacks.

Epidemic - All carnivorous species are afflicted by an energy-sapping disease. During this Era, all animal species with a carnivore or omnivore Nutrition Symbol have 0 Competitive Strength. Eating other animal species thus becomes an impossible task. In addition, carnivores and omnivores are left out in the evaluation of Competitive Strength.

Low mutation rate - Changing environmental conditions lead to a decrease in the mutation rate. Single Mutations cost 1 Darwin Point in this Era, and Double Mutations cost a maximum of 5 Darwin Points.

Meat boom - Small animals reproduce incredibly quickly due to wonderful conditions of nature, however, the excessive feeding renders the Earth nearly barren. In all biomes there are 6 units of meat and 2 units of plants. Biomes that are difficult to access are not affected (see 'Biome Cards', page 3).

Meteor strike - A huge meteor strikes the Earth with enormous force. Whirled-up dust darkens the sky for an entire Era. Nature suffers immensely. All biomes contain only 3 units of meat and 4 units of plants. Biomes that are difficult to access are not affected (see 'Biome Cards', page 3).

Optimal conditions - No event shapes this Era; everything is peaceful and quiet.

Plant boom - Epidemics decimate the number of small animals. Plants take advantage of this and are growing rapidly. There are now 2 units of meat and 6 units of plants in all biomes. Biomes that are difficult to access are not affected (see 'Biome Cards', page 3).

Volcanic eruption - A volcano erupts with incredible force and destroys an entire biome. The 'Volcanic eruption' Event Card replaces a randomly drawn Biome Card when changing biomes and is placed like a regular Biome Card with the use of a Continental Card. The biome 'Volcanic eruption' is uninhabitable for one Era. New animal species cannot be placed in this biome and all existing species have to be migrated to another till the end of the Era in order to survive. In the following Era the biome 'Volcanic eruption' is considered as a Tropical rainforest. Only after one Era as a Tropical rainforest, can the 'Volcanic eruption' biome be replaced by another Biome Card (i.e. it is not affected by the eventcard 'Rotation axis shift' until after it has been a Tropical rainforest for one Era).

Game Versions

In the following pages we present the Beginners' Game, the Two-player Version, the 2 vs. 2 Co-op Version, and the Child-friendly Rules (7+) of Darwin's Choice (for all versions **knowing the rules of the base game is required**). Feel completely free to develop your own variations. Darwin's Choice is very modular and therefore allows for many different versions of gameplay. For example, the game can be shortened to **3 Eras** if there is not enough time for 4. Simply unleash your creativity and have fun!

Beginners' Game

Darwin's Choice has its very own game mechanism. To help you get started, we have prepared a Beginners' Game for you. **You can play it after or while explaining the rules.**

1 Set up the game as described in the base rules and pick the following biomes: **High mountains, Tropical rainforest, Ocean and Savanna.** Even with 5-6 players, only 4 biomes are used in the Beginners' Game.

2 All players draw 5 small and 5 large Animal Cards and place them openly in front of themselves.

3 Take turns creating the species. Place them in the biomes laid on the table. You may help each other. Just check whether the Requirements of the biomes are met. **The Food Supply does not play a role yet.**

4 After you have created all the animal species, distribute the Food Chips among these species, determine which species eat, which get eaten and which starve. The best way to do this is to **arrange all animal species in the biomes according to their Adaptation.** In addition, place the corresponding Continental Chip next to the most adapted species of each biome.

5 The remaining steps of the Evaluation Phase are omitted, i.e. **no Darwin Points are distributed**, and the same applies to the first step of the Transition Phase 'Event Cards'. The remaining Transition Phase is carried out in accordance with the rules (two biomes are replaced).

6 Try to keep your species alive using Mutations (Double Mutations are free in the Beginners' Game) and Migrations **(new animal species will not be created).** Help each other and constantly rearrange the Food Distribution to meet the new conditions. The same applies to the Continental Chip.

7 **A complete Evaluation Phase** with all 5 steps is then carried out. After this, you can determine which player won this Beginners' Game, however, winning is not the focus here, **the important thing is getting acquainted with the rules.**

Two-player Version

For the two-player game, from **each of the following pairs of biomes one biome is removed from the game:**

Savanna/Steppe	High mountains/Highlands
Wetland/Swamp	Coast/Islands
Ocean/Coral reef	Desert/Stone desert
Taiga/Tundra	Polar desert/Cold desert
Trop. rainforest/Cloud forest	

Thus, there will be 13 Biome Cards in the Biome Card stack (9 selected biomes + Mountains, Hill country, Semidesert and Subtropical dry forest). Additionally, the Event Cards **'Continental drift' and 'Volcanic eruption'**, as well as **2 Continental Cards and the corresponding Continental Chips** are removed.

A two-player game is played with **3 biomes** and once again, 4 Eras. It is best to sit opposite to each other and place all the biomes either to the right or left of the players. All stacks and chips are placed above the biomes.

Between the first and the second Era, 1 biome is replaced, and after the second and third Era 2 biomes **(1/2/2).** After the Biome Cards have been replaced, they are shuffled back into the stack of Biome Cards i.e. **there is no biome discard pile.**

In the Two-player Version a **Trade Zone** with 4 animal cards is set up.

Child-friendly Rules (7+)

To prepare the game, 13 Biome Cards are assembled as described in the 'Two-player-Version'.

The Biome Cards and the two stacks of Animal Cards are shuffled. In addition, an **unsorted stack is formed from the Competition Chips** and placed next to the stacks of cards. Event Cards, Continental Cards/Chips and Food Chips remain in the game box and are not used.

Each player receives all the Player Markers of one color and draws **10 cards**, which they can freely assemble from both stacks of Animal Cards.

In each Era, **3 Biome Cards** are drawn and placed in the middle of the table, **together with a Competition Chip**, which is placed like a fourth biome.

As in the first Era of the base game, the players create animal species (tagged with their Player Markers) in turn, until everyone has passed on the Era. When creating the animal species, however, **it is not necessary to check whether they can obtain enough food for themselves**, since this component of the game is omitted. All the players must do is make sure that their animal species **meet the Requirements** of the biomes. The Competition Chip is seen as a **biome without Requirements**, where the species with the most Competitive Strength symbols are the most adapted.

The Additional Actions 'Redrawing Cards' and 'Trading' are also allowed in this version.

After all the players have passed, the Evaluation Phase begins. Each created animal species receives **1 point.** In addition, the most adapted species of each biome, including the Competition Chip, receives **the number of Darwin Points shown.** If two species are equally well adapted, both receive the number of Darwin Points shown (the Competitive Strength and food required are not compared).

After the Evaluation Phase, **all 4 biomes (3 Biome Cards and one Competition Chip) and all the animal species are removed from the game.** Each player will get back their Player Markers and **all the Darwin Points** they have won from their animal species. For the next Era, 3 new Biome Cards and a new Competition Chip are placed in the middle of the table.

Everyone draws new cards until they have a total of 10 cards in their hand again. Unlike in the base game, however, the players may choose which of their **remaining cards** from the previous **Era they want to keep and which to discard.**

The game ends after the Evaluation Phase of the fourth and last Era. The player with the most Darwin Points wins. If there is a tie, there will simply be several winners.
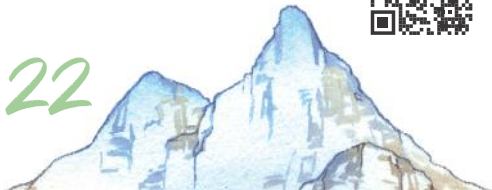
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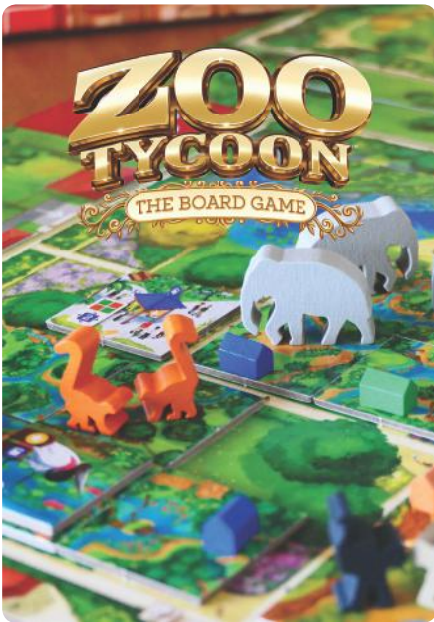
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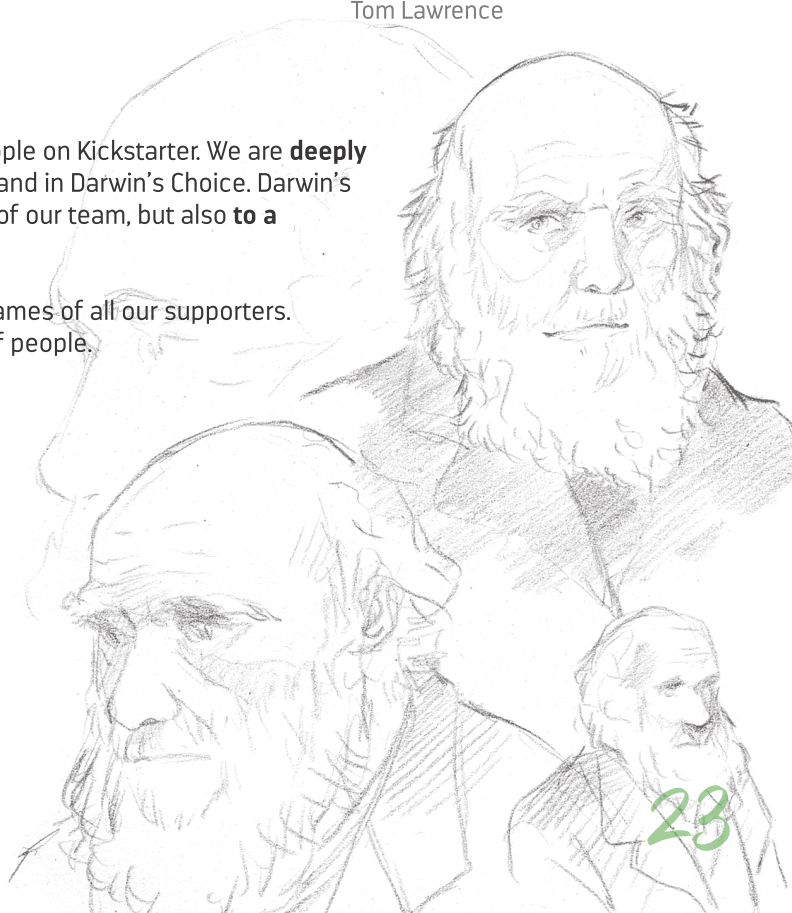
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Summary of the Rules

Every player receives 10 cards. The game is played counter-clockwise and runs over 4 Eras, each consisting of 3 phases.

I. Action Phase

Main Actions - One per turn; One per animal species in each Era

- **Create** – Lay out an animal species with at least 1 head and 1 body. The species' names on all Animal Cards must be aligned horizontally.
- **Mutate** – Add, remove or replace an Animal Card. Double Mutations cost up to 3 Darwin Points.
- **Migrate** – Move an animal species to any other biome.

After a Main Action, animal species must provide enough food for themselves and meet the Requirements of their biome.

Additional Actions

- **Card Redrawing** – Discard all cards but 1 and draw again once. Only possible at the beginning of each Era.
- **Trading** – During their turn, an active player may exchange one card with the Trade Zone.

II. Evaluation Phase

1. **Checking the Requirements** – All species that do not meet the Requirements of their biome become extinct. For an extinct species, the player receives a maximum of 1 Darwin Point.
2. **Food Evaluation** – Evaluate which species eat, which starve, and which get eaten.
3. **Survival** – All surviving species of an Era receive 1 Darwin Point.
4. **Adaptation** – The winning animal species in each biome are awarded 2-3 Darwin Points.
5. **Competitive Strength** – The 3 most competitive species across all biomes of an Era receive 3, 2 or 1 Darwin Point/s.

III. Transition Phase

1. **Event Cards** – An Event Card is drawn and activated.
2. **Biome Change** – 3-4 players (2/3/3) or 5-6 players (3/4/4).
3. **Food Redistribution** – Food Supply is adjusted to the Requirements of the new biomes and potential Event Card effects. The new Food Supply is distributed to the species according to their Adaptation.
4. **Player Markers** – All Player Markers are turned to the side without the check mark.
5. **Renewing Trade Zone** – The Animal Cards in the Trade Zone are replaced by new cards.
6. **Replenishing the Hand** – All players replenish their hands back to 10 cards.
7. **New First Player** – The First Player Marker changes counter-clockwise.

End of the Game

After the Evaluation Phase of the fourth and thus final Era, the game ends. The player with the most Darwin Points wins the game. In case of a tie, several players win the game.