

Untitled - August 13, 2025

Speaker Welcome to Pickup and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I leave the library and deliver an episode to you while I walk home. I'm Brendan Riley. Well, good morning, listeners. It's a lovely day here in suburban Chicago. I say lovely, but it looks like it might rain soon, so hopefully it stays lovely and not rainy. We'll see. As I mentioned a couple of times, my wife and I took a trip to Colorado recently and we had a delightful time visiting a number of state parks and national parks and wildlife preserves, looking at birds. And it got me thinking about games related to the outdoors, which made me look up the theme episodes I've done. And I do not have a theme episode on this topic, so it's time for another theme storm. For those of you new to the podcast, or actually it's been twenty or thirty episodes since I did a theme storm, so you could be new and have been around half a year and never heard one. A theme storm is an episode where I choose a broad theme, and then I recommend some games to go with that theme within sort of subsets of that theme. Today I have ten games to recommend. So I have four subjects, four main games for each of those, and then a couple alternates if there are other things you'd like to consider. So let's jump right in. Our theme storm today is the Great Outdoors. I'm not talking here about the John Candy movie, although that is a delight. Instead, I'm talking about the actual going outside and doing stuff. But let's say it's raining. Let's say you've just gotten back from a journey to a national park or a state park, and you want to reflect on those great outdoors. You can do so with one of these games. So start with the most obvious answer here is parks. Parks is a time track game? Time track. Resource management. Contract fulfillment game designed by Henry Audubon. The third, I believe, who is the grandchild of the famous bird chronicler, after whom the Audubon Society is named. The game was released by Keymaster Games and originally used art from the fifty nine parks print series. They've since released a second edition that has different art. I suspect that the licensing on the print series was prohibitive cost wise, and they wanted to do new art so they could own the art outright and not have to keep paying the licensing. I'm glad I have the fifty nine parks series for my art, because it is beautiful and I think the new art is fine, but not spectacular. The way that the old art was parks is a, like I said, a time track game. So you have a little you have two little hikers who are going on a trail, and on your turn, you must move one of them forward, at least one space. And you can't go to a space that another player is already occupying unless you use your campfire, which you only get one campfire per journey. I think you play four journeys in the game. It is a little bit cutthroat, because you might take the spot that you know another person needs to keep them from getting it, or you might claim the journey that you know they wanted because you're going to get it eventually. And you can see they're going to get it soon. But mostly it is a game where you are accumulating resources and then spending those resources to complete journeys. And the journeys give you points. It's a beautifully designed game. It's really easy to understand. It's fun to play. It's a little cutthroat, but not outrageously so, and overall it packs a good punch for the size the game is in. It also comes with a really nice insert, so you can organize your pieces well and have a lot of fun with it. So that is from twenty nineteen. Parks. The other game I would suggest if you want a game that's about visiting parks, there's also trekking the national parks. This is from twenty eighteen. It is also themed around the national parks. The art is not nearly as nice, and the gameplay at first appears to be ticket to ride style gameplay. You have

your it's a point to point movement game. You have a little figure, you're moving around, you are spending tokens to acquire cards, but because of the way the cards come out and the way the tokens move around, it is incredibly cutthroat. Like it feels at first like a game that's just going to be kind of light hearted card fulfillment. Whoever gets the most cards wins. No, it is a bloodbath in the national parks, and you are racing each other to these goals. You can see what other people have and you can cut them off. The movement stuff is is not always easy to do. It's it's a interesting game, but way meaner than it appears to be. We've played it a couple of times. I mean, if somebody really wants to play it, I will, of course, but generally I don't want to play it again. It's really mean. The main reason I've kept it in the collection is that it was a gift from one of our in-laws, so I'm hesitant to get rid of it. Yeah. It's a brutal game that's trekking the national parks. An alternate to parks. All right, so maybe you don't want to just view the parks. Maybe you want to create them. So the next theme that I have for the great outdoors is constructing habitats. So there are some games where you are creating spaces for animals to live and observing them. So the two games that I would put here are creating spaces for animals to live. The two the game I would suggest here is the winner is Cascadia. Cascadia is an entwined drafting game, meaning you have these tiles that you're taking and you have these animal tokens that you are getting that go with the tiles you're taking. And your goal is to create these large habitats full of animals and unified terrains, uh, types. And then you score points based on the terrain types. So it's a really interesting game, solid implementation, very fun. We've played it a lot. And I have the landmarks expansion, which has just led to us playing it more. So it's a really good game. Definitely worth playing if you get a chance. That's Cascadia, I really like that one. It's designed by Randy Flynn with art from Beth Sobel, published by FlatOut Games. Cascadia is an interesting counterpoint to calico. Cascadia and Calico both feel like very similar games. Calico gets more intense as the game goes along. Cascadia does not because you're spreading out, so there is some intensity in trying to complete combinations of patterns, but it's not. It's nothing like the intensity of calico, which for many people is a good thing. Calico. A lot of people find that game too intense. If you want other games in similar vein, Harmonies is a very good game where you are constructing similar habitats using entwine drafting. I really like harmonies. I maybe even like it better than Cascadia, at least in the short term, because it's newer, and so I haven't gotten to play it as much. I think probably in the long run, Cascadia has more staying power. And then there's also the little card game Nimalia, which I believe is from All-play. play. This is a really interesting card drafting game, where you have a little hand of cards that got different animals on it, and you're trying to place them out in your tableau in ways that will score you as many points as possible. It works really smooth. It's fun to play, easy to enjoy. That's Nimalia Those are my recommendations for games about constructing habitats. Next up, games about going on to mountains. So while we were in Colorado, we went up to the top of Pikes Peak. We also went to the top of one other two other mountains, or top of one other mountain and very high on another. So we had three different days where we went above eleven thousand feet. Pikes peak is fourteen thousand. And so we really enjoyed those journeys. It's very high altitude so makes it harder to breathe, but interesting and fun. So that was great having the opportunity to do that. So it got me thinking about games, about mountain climbing. The obvious winner here, the game that you should play if you want to play a game about mountain climbing is K2. K2 from designer Adam Kaluza and artist Jurek Nocon, published by Rebel Spiele. This is a game

where you are planning a journey up and down the mountain K2, where you have two climbers who are trying to get to the top and back down. If one of them gets down, you score. If both of them die, you don't score. Yikes. In the game, you are planning your journey up. You are trying to find places where you can stop and rest. You're trying to get to as high as you can and then back down without dying. The part of the trick of it is that a significant portion of K2 is in the death zone, which is the part of the mountain that is high enough that you just get sicker while you're there. There's also a weather thing that comes through that makes it harder to survive. So kind of planning your journey and trying to anticipate the weather and make it through is the key to enjoying K2. I really like that game. It's interesting mechanisms. It's about the weight of ticket to ride, but with a much more interesting story. So I got rid of it because we don't play it much around my place, and I'm trying to keep games moving in and out. And so but it's definitely a game. I would not turn around if somebody said, hey, let's play some K2, I'd be like, I'm down for that. So that's K2, published in twenty ten. If you want an alternate game about being in the mountains, particularly the cold mountains, I would recommend Mountains of Madness. This is a really weird and interesting game from Matt Leacock. Or is it Rob Daviau or both? I think it's I think it's Rob Daviau. Actually, in this game you are leading a journey into mountains and things. You start to go mad and there's these madness cards that come into play that are really make the game really interesting and fun. So if you get a chance to play Mount at Mountains of Madness, I recommend that one as well. So finally, the third theme that I wanted to, or the fourth theme that I wanted to mention, uh, regarding the great outdoors is observing animals. So a big part of our trip was watching animals. We saw marmots, we saw an albino chipmunk, we saw lots of birds. Obviously we saw elk, we saw deer and we saw mountain goats. I think that's it. And prairie dogs. Lots of prairie dogs. So getting to see these animals out in nature is really interesting and fun, and it's always a treat when that happens. If you wanted a game about that, I would recommend Wild Serengeti. This is a action selection game where you are putting out animals into this grid and scoring them, and the idea of the animals you're putting out are animals you're finding in the wild, and scoring them is like you're taking a good picture that shows these different animals in different arrangements. It's a slow game. We've only played it once. We had a good time with it, but it played really slow. Uh, definitely something I want to revisit, but interesting theme, beautiful art, really fun. Meeples I believe it was a Kickstarter. I ended up getting it as a goodwill purchase and enjoying it. That's designer by designed by Gung Ho Kim with art by Honey Chung and Sophia Kang from Bad Comet games. Now, if you like the idea of observing animals but aren't sure you want to go to the wild Serengeti, two other options. There's Habitats, which is sounds a lot like harmonies, but habitats is different. Uh, inhabits your habitats. You're observing these different animals, and you're doing that by placing out these cards that reflect where the different animals like to hang out. Uh, and it uses a scoring mechanism very similar to Nova. Luna. In fact, that's the one I mentioned in the Rosenberg Game episode, where he borrowed that mechanism for Nova Luna from habitats. So check out habitats if you get a chance. The other alternative, of course, is wingspan, which is a game about observing birds in a wildlife sanctuary. I've talked about wingspan plenty of times on this pod. Well, that's about it for my my great outdoors theme storm today. I'm curious, what games would you add to this theme? I'd love to hear that you can share those over on BoardGameGeek in Guild 3269, where people talk about the episodes sometimes, and I would love to hear what you think of those episodes. If you want to

reach out to me directly, Brendan at Rattlebox games is my email or wombat nine to nine? It's my BoardGameGeek username. Thanks for joining me on my walk today. I hope your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye. [dog barking] Hello. Hello. Hello, hello. Okay, bye. [dog barking fades] Brought to you by Rattlebox Games.