



2025 Case Study



What is the Green Game Jam?

The Green Game Jam is an annual challenge for studios who work on live games with existing audiences. Studios build into their games new content that engages players on environmental topics whilst working towards a collective goal that helps restore and protect our planet.

The project is run by Playing for the Planet, a membership organisation facilitated by the United Nations Environment Programme. Playing for the Planet's mission is to activate players globally to protect and restore our planet whilst accelerating decarbonisation across the video games industry.

2025 Theme & Goal

The 2025 theme for the Green Game Jam was 'All in for Nature'. We challenged studios to engage their players on the amazing power of the natural world whilst fundraising for conservation efforts. At the same time, we invited players to join a global movement of gamers who care about nature by leaving a message on our dedicated pledge page. Because gamers understand the power of teamwork, strategy, and taking bold action.

Why 'All in for Nature'?

Nature is where people feel climate change the most - in more frequent and extreme weather, rising temperatures, or in spotting less wildlife. In addition to these aspects, one third of climate change mitigation strategies depend on the natural world. And last but not least, nature is non-contentious; across the spectrum of opinion, people care about nature. We thought it would be the most effective way to win people's hearts and minds.



Without nature there's no world to explore, no adventures to be had, no food on our plates or clean water to drink. We're not separate from nature, we are part of it, and we depend on it. And right now, nature needs protection.



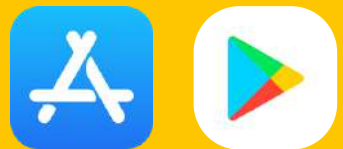


Gameplay

A mobile game available on iOS and Google Play, that merges the immersive elements found in classic role-playing games, with the exciting adventure of GPS exploration and location based gaming.

Players walk around their neighbourhoods and travel through local surroundings to find and complete quests and level up their hero in game.

Platforms



Background

How Northern Forge's Green Game Jam campaigns grew from a one-off event to a core part of the game's ongoing storyline

Orna's 2025 activation was only made possible through buy-in from their community, whose continued enthusiasm and support has transformed a test-case 2024 event into a lasting part of the game universe. To date, Orna is the one of the only studios whose annual Green Game Jam activations form one ongoing storyline – and in this section, we'll catch you up on that story.

April 2024: The Test Case

In April 2024 the team launched the very first iteration of what would become a staple of their annual Green Game Jam mechanics.

- Players were introduced to the in-universe people of Terra, whose production of a non-sustainable superfood spawned the pollutant-based Murk Monsters.
- These monsters appeared in 20 pre-determined city locations across the world that could be traveled to remotely.
- Players could plant trees in their place which would benefit local players stats.

The event proved very popular with players, 70% of which scored the Terra's Day storyline and event as a whole 6/10 or above – giving the team license to go ahead with their full-scale event in September.

September 2024: The Main Event

This time around Murk Monsters were still unleashed on the map, but locations were chosen based on real-world polluted areas.

- Players flagged to the team spots in their neighborhoods that had been littered or otherwise polluted which, once approved, became live Gloomsites in-game.
- In the end, players submitted 1,140 real-world Gloomsites and visited the Gloomsites 89,000 times – strong engagement data from a small but dedicated community.

But the event wasn't just a fun opportunity to break the usual rules of a GPS game. It created an effect of 'paying it forward' as players were incentivized to plant trees in places where they

wouldn't necessarily be able to reap the benefits themselves.

Meanwhile taking the time to identify real-world Gloomsites motivated some players to clear them up or to make arrangements to have them addressed, and they shared updates with the community in a dedicated #Terras-Legacy Discord channel. The numbers backed up the educational side of this gameplay – in an end of event survey, 46.8% said the Terra's Legacy event prompted them to take positive environmental action in the real world.

For the 2025 Green Game Jam, the Orna team wanted to dive back into this storyline. They knew they had their players' support for environmentally themed content, and wanted to show them that the 2024 activation wasn't a just one-and-done but something they as a studio care deeply about.



Campaign Overview

The Murk Monsters are back on every continent – and this time players aren't just fighting on behalf of humans, but animals as well

The campaign, titled 'Natureblight' saw players journey across all continents to aid unique species battling the destructive force known as the Murk - a threat to their environment and survival. During the activation, the team also ran an in-app purchase promotion offering players eco-themed building sprites and event currency. This would enable them to make their Origin Town look more sustainable and also speed up the acquisition of a new in-game follower from Natureblight.

Campaign Highlights

75%

participation rate

5%

players left a message of support for nature on the 'All in for Nature' campaign page



Themed IAP Promotion



New Animal Followers



Collaborative Battles



Social Media Infographics



Green Games Showcase

Player Journey



1 Introduction

Players begin their journey by meeting an NPC from last year's Green Game Jam. This recurrent character sets the emotional tone, explaining the urgent peril animals face worldwide due to human activities.

The team made sure that players couldn't miss Natureblight in-game by including a persistent character that would remain by your side until the questline was completed.

To ensure players would be reminded of the activation, it also took over the Event Hub, a feature always accessible from the main gameplay screen of the title.



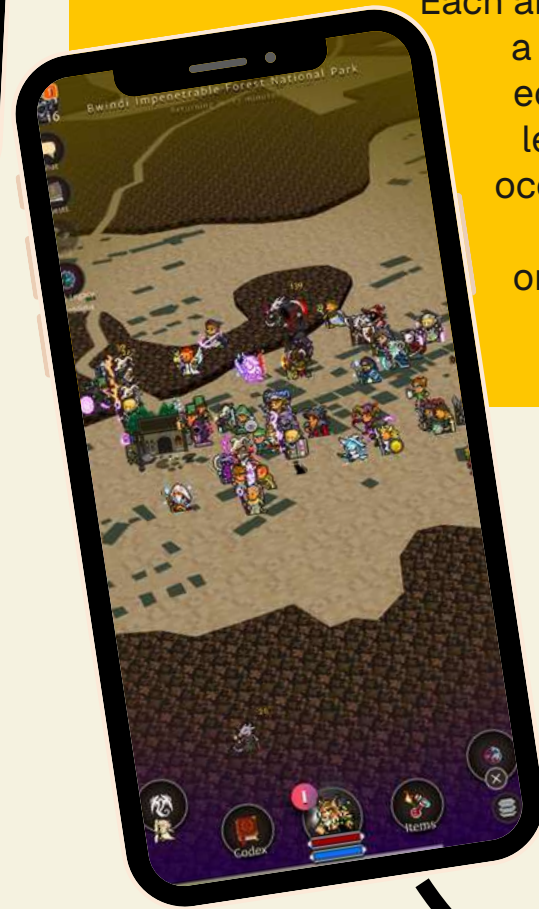
2 Gameplay

Players are transported to one of seven regions, each representing a continent.

In each region:

- Players meet and collaborate with each other.
- They enlist the help of a local animal ally.
- Together, they confront and defeat the Murk, a spreading environmental threat

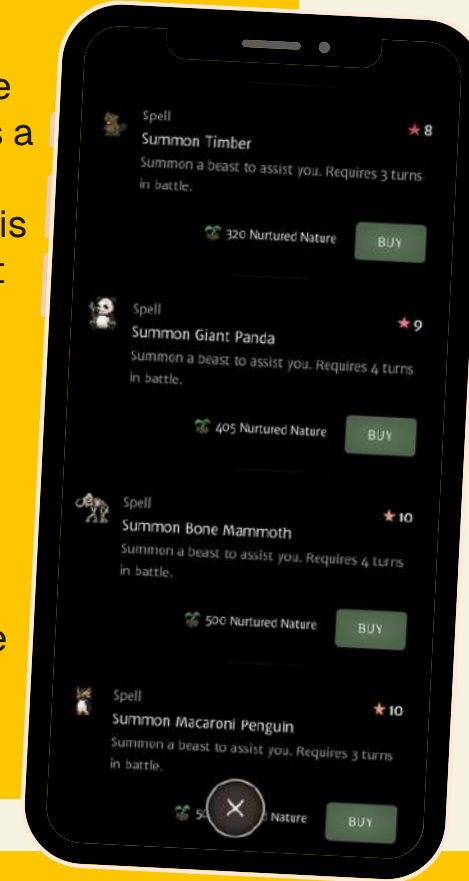
Each animal partner symbolizes a species facing real-world ecological threats. Players learn about deforestation, ocean pollution, habitat loss and more - all integrated organically into quests and dialogue.



Players gather in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, where they will meet a new ally - the mountain gorilla.

3 Conclusion & Reward

With each region's Murk defeated, players are able to keep the animal ally as a 'follower': an existing feature of the game, this is a passive companion that can help players in battle to different extents according to its tier. And the team ranked the Natureblight animal followers highly to incentivize participation, making the rewards more valuable to the average player.




4 Companion Events

At the same time an in-app purchase promotion offered players eco-themed building sprites and event currency, which would speed up the acquisition of the new in-game follower from the Murk Monster battles.

Northern Forge also delivered a social media campaign spotlighting these 7 pixelated pals featuring factual infographics about the species each follower was based on.





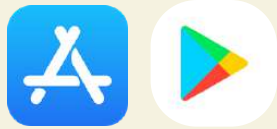
 **The animal followers that the team used as rewards weren't just cosmetic – they had in-battle stat benefits, incentivising participation for players that weren't already sold on the message**

The Outcomes

The community response was overwhelmingly positive, cementing this storyline as a lasting part of the game universe.

Business KPIs

75%
participation rate



Featured on App Store and Play Store



Appeared in Summer Games Fest's first Green Games Showcase

Player Sentiment

Timber the Beaver emerged as a popular breakout character

Environmental Impact

\$3162.97
donated to One Tree Planted through IAPs via Planet Play

Awards Success



Development Process

with Joshua O'Reilly & Oliver Birch, Product Marketers at Northern Forge Studios

What inspired you to create the 'Natureblight' campaign?

Our activation was inspired by the initial Green Game Jam kick-off session presentation with On the Edge. Their mission to bring nature back into people's everyday lives by redefining how they engage with it really resonated with us. We were also inspired by the cuteness, weirdness and wonder that animals affect us with. So, we knew our activation would be about marrying these two ideas.

To do this, we used the existing 'follower' feature of our game, centering the activation around 7 animals that players could not only connect with and help but use in their gaming experiences year-round. By employing one of the most popular systems of our game we were able to get players to bring nature back into their everyday lives through regular gameplay.

And to incentivize participation for players who weren't 100% sold on the environmental message, we shifted from the cosmetic rewards players

received last year to animal followers that provided in-battle stat benefits, baking long-term use and strategic value into their design.

We also know that we wanted to show our commitment to this initiative by making our 2025 entry an extension of the story we told last year, rather than a standalone experience. This brought Gi, our quest giver back to the forefront of the story. And the storyline of Natureblight continued this multiple-year long process of blending our in-game universe with our real life world to demonstrate to players how we need to work together to protect our Earth.

What were you and the team most proud of?

The team at Northern Forge are incredibly proud of what we accomplished with Terra's Legacy: Natureblight. We're most proud of the dedication of both the studio and the community to make this event a huge success and to keep the focus on what matters most: our planet! We may be a small studio, but we try to aim big with our Green Game Jam efforts!

What was your biggest challenge?

Our biggest challenge this year was trying to surpass last year's activation. The theme last year of inspiring action worked so well with the mechanics of our game, we had players from around the world cleaning up their local areas and showing the change through our game.

Overcoming this challenge was a matter of realizing that this year would inevitably be a little different, and focusing on how we could best connect players with the nature around them. Utilizing the global nature of our game to recognize that ecological problems are not unique to any particular area of the world. And working together is the way we will enact change.

But in fact, we don't plan to do much differently next year. We hope our Green Game Jam activation can continue on with the (Terra's) Legacy we've been building, and continue to innovate while exploring more of the planet and its challenges with our players.



(L to R) Josh & Olly celebrate with their Best Small Studio Award at the 2025 Green Game Summit in London, UK



The Learnings



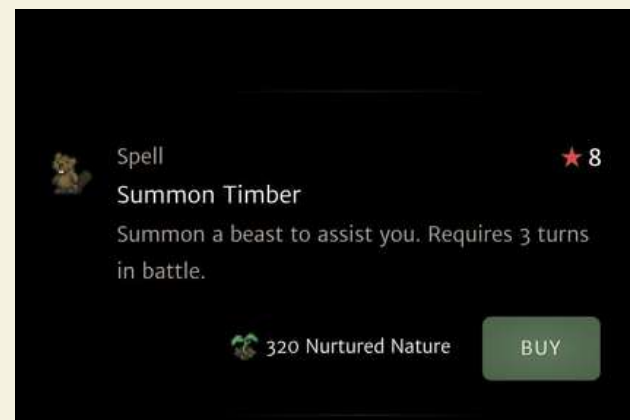
1 Get buy-in from your players

Evidence suggests that if people are actively opposed to an environmental message you won't change their mind, no matter how good your game. Instead, it's about winning over those who are interested but don't know where to start. This event was built off the back of players support for 2024 in-game content that explored the topic of sustainability. From there, the team were able to deepen their players' engagement.



2 Test early, learn early

And that 2024 event was in turn built off the back of an earlier test event. Exploring player sentiment early is an important step to ensure the activation resonates. It's okay if your first activation in the Green Game Jam is relatively small. Running a pilot activation like the one Orna ran in April 2024 can provide valuable insights into how players perceive the concept, what excites them, and where adjustments might be needed.



3 Rewards that players want

In a game like Orna, players aren't always interested in decorations. So this year, they were able to unlock animal 'followers' that provided a visual reminder of the campaign's message year round whilst offering in-battle strategic advantages.

Even the in-app purchases that made cosmetic changes to player base had the effect of speeding up the rate that players could unlock these followers.



4 There are no small studios...

In show business, they say 'There are no small parts, only small actors.' In the Green Game Jam, we see small studios do amazing things every year by playing to their strengths – agility, values-driven cultures, tight-knit teams and cult-like followings. So despite being only a team of 10, Northern Forge managed to scoop up our coveted 'Media's Choice Award' in recognition of their amazing efforts.



5 Learn and iterate

We think Northern Forge is so successful because they treat each activation as a small step in a longer journey – like the individual tasks in their in-game quests. And not only that but they capture what worked, what didn't, and refine for the future. As a small studio, they are keenly aware that small actions can build toward a big impact over time. There's a lot that can be learned here for studios of all sizes!



So, why join the Green Game Jam?

1 Boost your game's KPIs

Orna saw a 75% participation rate - that's 50-60% higher than other similar events that year.

2 Build a stronger connection with your players

The highly positive player sentiment for this campaign was no accident. Northern Forge spent the year before had paying close attention to what players love through their 2024 Green Game Jam activations.

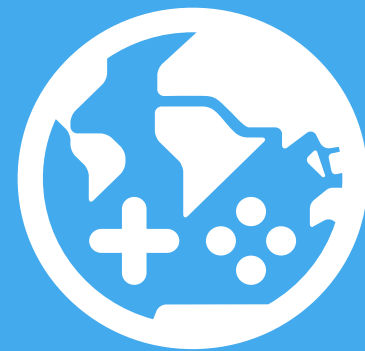
3 Win visibility for your game

Northern Forge was featured by Google Play and the Apple App Store who were impressed by their campaign proposal. They also won our Media's Choice Award.

4 Make an impact for nature!

At the end of the day, the purpose of this campaign was to educate, fundraise and make a positive impact for nature and it was successful – Orna were able to teach their players about the plight of endangered species worldwide whilst raising money for One Tree Planted.





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