Gaming for Nature – Is computer gaming a new frontier for conservation?

Funded project: The Strategic Initiative Workshop Fund

Project description

Video games have become a vast industry (worth $29 billion worldwide in 2005, $42 billion in 2010), and gaming plays an important part of the lives of significant numbers of people across the world.

In recent years, new trends in the gaming industry have emerged. These include the development of a large industry of ‘serious games’ and the use of gamification strategies in various novel scenarios. Conservation organisations and game development companies have already started to use games as part of nature conservation strategies, but the level of engagement has been limited.

The project held a two-day event that brought together the biodiversity conservation and computer gaming communities to think critically of the potential benefits or threats of digital games for conservation. The aims were to discuss in more detail the potential use and implications of video games for nature conservation, learn from previous experiences and foster collaborative projects. The event included a well-attended evening seminar that was open to the public, and a one-day expert workshop.

Aims

The project aimed to investigate the positive and negative implications of digital games for biodiversity conservation, and to foster new collaborative project.

Key activities

A Seminar was held on 8th November 2011 at Cripps Court, Magdalene College, University of Cambridge. This was attended by over 80 people from the University of Cambridge, other members of CCI and CCF, games design professionals

A Workshop was held on November 9th 2011 with 25 specialists from different disciplines, in Cripps Court, Magdalene College, University of Cambridge. Its aim was to discuss in more detail the potential use and implications of video games for nature conservation, learn from previous experiences and foster collaborative projects.

Key contacts

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Start date: 1st September 2011
Status: Complete
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Outputs

Title
Website Resource: Development of a Website (www.gamesfornature.org) to develop the collaboration begun at the seminar and workshop in Cambridge.

Future work will focus on developing a new game called “Race the Wild” with the University of Cambridge Computer Laboratory

Conservation impact

While this project has not had any direct impacts for conservation so far that we are aware of, the games for nature website may well have fostered new connections with impacts that are outside our view. There are also plans to develop a new game that would have a conservation impact if successful. This new project involves several CCI partners FFI, BTO, UNEP-WCMC and the University of Cambridge.

CCI partners involved:

- UNEP-WCMC
- The Department of Geography

Other organisations

- Peruvian Society for Environmental law (SPDA)

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