

Año Nuevo

*A game of elephant seals
for 3-6 players*

by Hutson Hall



The Life of the Elephant Seal

Every year, Northern elephant seals travel thousands of miles to the beaches of California's Año Nuevo State park. After a long, hard year of hunting to build up their supplies of fat, they return to land to mate. The most experienced bulls know the best beaches to visit to ensure they will have many females in their harem, and their young will survive re-entry into the unforgiving ocean. The wisest bulls can judge how much food they will need to store up in order to make the most of their time on land. The biggest and toughest bulls can ensure they get the best beaches by fighting off those smaller than them.

The life of an elephant seal is harsh, but it's the only life they've ever known.

Components

- **48 Prey Cards** – 16 Crab, 16 Squid, 8 Shark, 8 Skate
- **60 Harem Cards** – 20 Prime Age, 20 Matron, 20 Primiparous
- **10 Location Cards**
- **5 Location Tokens** – Numbered 1-5
- **6 Reference Cards**
- **6 Sets of Tokens** – Numbered 1-5, Ocean, Seal Token, VP Tracker
- **Turn Tracker**
- **VP Tracker**
- **Seal Figurine**

Card Layouts

Prey Cards

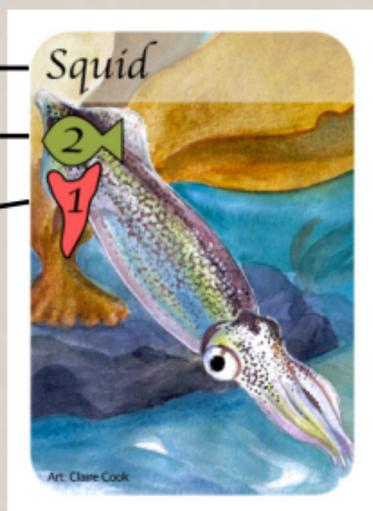
Card Name —————

Food Value —————

Used to Mate

Fight Value —————

Used to Fight



Card Layouts

Harem Cards

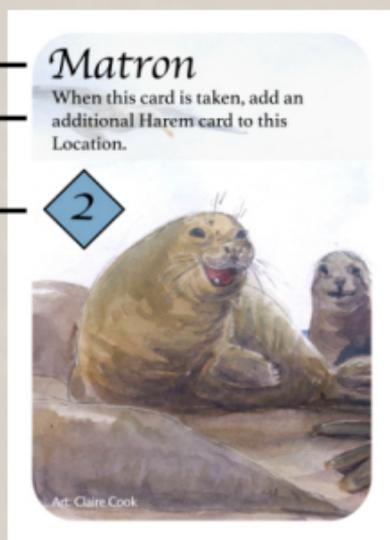
Card Name _____

Special Text _____

Only on Matron card

Victory Points _____

Collect the most to win



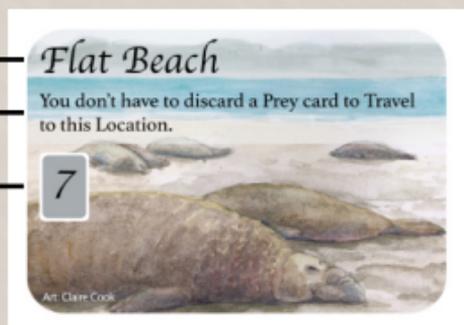
Location Cards

Card Name _____

Special Text _____

Capacity _____

Number of Harem cards
this Location holds



Setup

- 1.** Shuffle the Location cards, Harem cards, and Prey cards into their respective decks, then place the Harem and Prey decks in the center of the table.
- 2.** Flip over cards from the Location deck equal to the number of players minus one, then put the rest of the Location cards back in the box. Place a square Location Token sequentially on each Location card.
- 3.** Each player takes a set of tokens equal to the number of Locations, plus an Ocean token, and a Seal token.
- 4.** Place the Seal Figurine on the Turn Tracker at turn 2.

Summary

In *Año Nuevo*, players will take the role of bull Northern elephant seals as they complete their yearly life cycle.

Each turn, players will Travel to either the Ocean or to one of the Location cards. In the Ocean, they will collect hands of Prey cards, which they will use to Fight (using the cards' Fight values) and Mate (using the cards' Food values). The winner of the game is the first player to score 40 Victory Points, collected through Mating.

Overview

1. Beginning of Turn*

Move turn tracker up and place Harem cards on Locations if the tracker resets.

2. Travel

Reveal Tokens and move your Seal Token.

Discard a Prey card if you Travel to a Location.

3. Posture

Players newly sharing a Location display a number of Prey cards face-down, then decide if they will back down. If any players do, return to the Travel step.

4. Fight

Discard Prey cards displayed during the Posture phase, then assign Alpha, Beta, Bachelor roles based on results.

5. Hunt/Mate*

- Players in the Ocean draw a Prey card.
- Alphas and Betas on a Location discard a Prey card to take Harem cards from the Location equal to the Food value of the Prey card discarded. Each time a player takes a card, they increase their VP score and add more Harem cards to the Location if they took a Matron.

FIRST FIVE TURNS

During the first five turns of the game, only conduct the steps marked with * as there will be no Harem cards on the Locations yet. Once the turn tracker has been reset and Harem cards have been placed on the Locations, conduct the turn normally.

Beginning of Turn

Move Turn Tracker

At the start of each turn, move the seal figurine placed on the turn tracker up by one number. If it began on 7, reset it to 1.

Replenish Harem cards

If the turn tracker was reset to 1 this turn, discard all Harem cards, then flip Harem cards face-up onto each Location equal to that Location's . If the Harem deck runs out, shuffle the Harem discard pile to form a new Harem deck.

Travel

Each player secretly selects a token corresponding with where they wish to Travel. Once all players have selected their token, players simultaneously reveal their choice and move their Seal tokens.

Whenever a player Travels to a new Location or to the Ocean, they must discard a Prey card. If a player has no Prey cards, they may not Travel to a Location, but may still Travel to the Ocean.

Elephant seal mating locations have been carefully chosen through a centuries-long process of trial and error. The most popular locations have been chosen for their size, safety, and amount of effort to travel.

Posturing

If multiple players occupy the same Location, they must compete to become the Alpha of that Location. The Alpha will have first pick of the Harem cards and will pass along Harem cards to the Beta.

During Posturing, all players on a Location *who are not Betas or Bachelors* choose and simultaneously display any number of Prey cards from their hand, face-down such that all other players can see how many are displayed. Once players have seen how many cards their opponents have displayed, all players simultaneously show if they will stay and Fight or back down by showing a thumbs-up or thumbs-down.

- If there are multiple players who do not back down, they Fight to be the Alpha. All other players become Bachelors.

- If all players back down, repeat the Posturing step.

- If only one player does not back down, they win the Posturing step and become the Alpha. If there is only one other player Posturing, they become the Beta.

Otherwise, all other players Posturing complete a second round of Posturing (and Fighting, if necessary). The player who wins the second round becomes the Beta and all others become Bachelors.

Fighting

If, after Posturing, there are multiple players on a Location who did not back down, those players Fight.

To Fight, players reveal all cards displayed during the Posturing step and tally up their . The player with the most  becomes wins and becomes the Alpha. The player with the second-most  becomes the Beta. All other players become Bachelors. **All Prey cards used to Fight are discarded.**

Tie-Breaker

If players are tied during a Fight (or if players are still tied after the tie-breaker conditions at the end of the game), the first tied player to bellow like an elephant seal wins the tie. If it is unclear which player bellowed first, all players vote on which bellow was the most fearsome.

Elephant seals don't fight unless necessary. They would prefer to use their valuable fat stores on mating. Before coming to blows, they attempt to intimidate the other into backing down by drawing themselves up to their full height, baring their teeth, and letting out fearsome bellows.

Hunting

Each turn a player spends in the Ocean, they draw one Prey card from the Prey deck and add it to their hand. If the Prey deck runs out, shuffle it to form a new Prey deck.

It is recommended to use these basic Hunting rules during your first time playing *Año Nuevo*. If you have the hang of the game and would like more complex gameplay, see the advanced Hunting rules on the next page. Otherwise, you can skip ahead.

Most of the elephant seal's year is spent hunting for prey to build up fat stores, as they do not eat at all while on the shore. Their favorite prey includes nutrient-rich sharks, crabs, skates, and squid.

Advanced Hunting

If you are playing with players who are used to more complex games, you can use these advanced Hunting rules instead of the basic Hunting rules to add a level of strategy to the game. The advanced Hunting rules allow players to gather information about what Prey cards other players have so they can better guess when to back down from fights.

When a player Travels to the Ocean, they set aside all Prey cards in their hand.

While Hunting, players will instead be interacting with Pools of Prey cards. Unlike their hands, players do not own cards from their Pool until they set them aside.

Each turn a player spends in the Ocean, they choose one card to set aside from their Pool and pass the remainder of their Pool to the player on their left (do not pass if you are the only player Hunting).

If a player has no Pool to choose from, they draw five cards from the Prey deck to create a new Pool (during the first turn, players will enter the Ocean and should draw new Pools). If the Prey deck runs out, reshuffle the Prey discard pile.

When a player leaves the Ocean and Travels to a Location, they put all cards they set aside into their hand and discard their Pool.

Mating

After Fighting is resolved, each player on a Location must discard a Prey card if possible. If you are an Alpha or Beta, you may take Harem cards equal to the  of the discarded Prey card.

Alphas always mate first, and may take any Harem cards they wish. Betas mate after the Alphas, and are assigned which Harem cards to take by the Alphas.

Bachelors may not take Harem cards, though they still must discard Prey cards.

When a player takes a Harem card, they move their VP tracker token up the VP Tracker by the  of the taken Harem card, then they discard the Harem card.

Note: When your score reaches 25, flip your seal token to the +25 side and start from 1.

Matrons: When a Matron card is taken, immediately add another card to the Location. When discarding a Prey card with more than 1 , you may take a Matron and flip a new Harem card before choosing another Harem card to take.

Female elephant seals only give birth to one pup per year, so it is important that the pup survives until maturity. Unfortunately, inexperienced mothers often lose track of their pup and end up feeding others, resulting in the malnourishment of both pups.

Ending the Game

If, at the end of a turn, one or more players have at least 40 VPs, the game ends immediately and the player with the most VPs wins.

In the event of a tie, ties are broken in order of:

- 1.** If one player is an Alpha and no other tying player is, they win.
- 2.** The tying player who has the most Prey cards left in their hand wins.
- 3.** Use the tie-breaker method on Page 8.

Clarifications

- If you discarded a Prey card with multiple  and have  remaining while there are no more Harem cards on your Location, that  is forfeit.
- Players who are uncontested on a Location are considered to be Alphas.
- If an Alpha leaves a Location, the Beta on that Location becomes the Alpha. If one Bachelor remains, they become the Beta. If multiple Bachelors remain, they remain Bachelors.
- If an Alpha becomes a Beta or Bachelor, any Beta on their Location becomes a Bachelor.

Credits

All card artwork done by Claire Cook, whom I was incredibly fortunate to have assist me on this game.

All design, iconography, rules, playtesting, and editing done by Hutson Hall.

Special Thanks to:

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