

## All a-flutter

### Pevans plays *Tweeet*

No, this is nothing to do with using extra vowels on Twitter. *Tweeet* is one of Corné van Moorsel's 2012 games, published by his own imprint, Cwali, and launched at Spiel '12. The most striking thing about the game is the wonderfully cute models that are the players' pieces and the foodstuffs they gather. The board is made up of 'strips' that are laid out as the players move further forward. The strips are actually rows of hexagonal spaces, so they're not rectangular. Some spaces (trees) show a foodstuff, and the appropriate piece is placed on the space, others are impassable lakes. The flip side shows nests and is only used for the last strip placed.



The players are divided into two teams: the robins (redbreasts) and the bluethroats. Each takes a bird model with a red breast or blue throat, as appropriate. Did I mention how cute these are? They also get some food, depending on where they are in turn order. These are nuts, strawberries, berries, caterpillars and ladybirds (or ladybugs for the American audience). They provide energy for the birds – there's a table on the board as a constant reminder for the players – and players' remaining food pieces are points at the end of the game.

Each round players move their birds – generally forwards, but there may be tactical reasons to go in other directions. Birds must end their move on a full tree and will get the resource from it. They can't move through food, lakes or other birds. They expend as much food as the number of spaces they moved. So a move of four spaces requires two strawberries (2 points each) or a caterpillar (4) or any other combination – and you can even get change if you spend more. Once they've spent their food, they get the piece from the space they landed on.



*Tweeet* on display at Spiel '12

As the birds move forward, the board is extended with new strips (and strips that fall too far behind are taken away, which will remove uncollected food). The last strip placed goes face down to show some nests, which is where the birds end up. All the birds of one colour need to be in the same nest, so the first to arrive sets the target. Once all the birds are

home, the teams score up: each team has the average points value of its players' remaining food. This neatly allows teams to have different numbers of players.

Of course, it's entirely possible that a bird will get stuck: if it can't pay for a long enough move to reach any food, it's out of the game. This is bad news for the team as this bird is worth -1 point at the end and still counts for calculating the average. Hence, players need to keep an eye on their teammates: eating their food is a really bad move! The rules have specific restrictions on team members communicating with each other – essentially, their birds have to be close enough.



Playing *Tweeeet* – starting from this end

Of course, the converse of taking food your teammate wants is grabbing the stuff that the opposition is after. This is clearly a good idea and it's entirely possible to restrict where the other team can get to. The question is whether it's worth compromising your own move to do this – and by how much. There's not much point in taking food from your opponents if they can then take yours and leave you stuck. Hence, you need to plan a few moves ahead – it may have cute pieces, but don't mistake this for a simple game.

There's a hare and tortoise element to the game, too. You can speed ahead to get first choice of the food. Or dawdle to Hoover up everything that's been left behind. The drawback to the first option is that you may not have much food (points) left at the end. The problem with the second option is that you can run out of food if those in front have cleared it all. Of course, you can vary this as the game goes: nip ahead and then try to clear all the food to leave a 'desert' the opposition can't cross.

*Tweeeet* isn't the deepest game in the world, but there's a lot more to it than the charming, family-friendly theme and components suggest. Mind you, any game from Mister van Moorsel is likely to involve plenty of thinking. The tactical opportunities for players, especially if they can work as a team, are fairly obvious. Executing them is a bit tricky, and winning trickier still! And don't think that the team with more players (for example, if five are playing and the teams are three and two players) will automatically win – it can be at a big disadvantage.

I've really enjoyed playing *Tweeeet* and it's gone down well with those who've joined me. However, it does get played more in a family context than with gamers. I give it 7/10 on my highly subjective scale.

*Tweeeet* is a strategy board game for 2-6 players (as two teams), aged 7+ and takes about 30 minutes to play. It was designed by Corné van Moorsel and published by Cwali. And it has really cute playing pieces.

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