



# Players and Their Pets: Gaming Communities from Beta to Sunset

*Mia Consalvo, Jason Begy*

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In the world of massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs), *Faunasphere* was but a blip on the screen in its short public life from 2009 to 2011. Its devoted players, many of them middle-aged women, entered a world that did not build on common fantasy or science-fiction tropes. There was no evil to defeat or realms to conquer, only friendly animals to care for and pollution to fight.

In *Players and Their Pets*, Mia Consalvo and Jason Begy argue that its very difference makes it critically important—even more so than the large, commercially successful games such as *World of Warcraft* that have all too often shaped game studies discourse. Consalvo and Begy demonstrate how the beta period of an MMOG can establish social norms that guide how the game is played. They also show how a game's platform creates expectations for how the game will work and who is playing it—and what happens when those expectations clash with the reality. Even while telling the story of this particular game and its predominantly female players, however, *Players and Their Pets* cautions against oversimplifying players based on their gender. *Faunasphere*'s playerbase enjoyed diverse aspects of the game, for varied reasons.

No other game studies book tracks the entire life cycle of an online game to examine how the game evolved in terms of design as well as how its player community responded to changes and events. The brief life of *Faunasphere* makes this possible.

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